

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 10546 2257

South



South

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
1215 EAST 58TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637
U.S.A.
LONDON: ROUTLEDGE Kegan Paul Ltd
11 BEDFORD SQUARE
W.C.1

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
1215 EAST 58TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637
U.S.A.
LONDON: ROUTLEDGE Kegan Paul Ltd
11 BEDFORD SQUARE
W.C.1

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
1215 EAST 58TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637
U.S.A.
LONDON: ROUTLEDGE Kegan Paul Ltd
11 BEDFORD SQUARE
W.C.1

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
1215 EAST 58TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637
U.S.A.
LONDON: ROUTLEDGE Kegan Paul Ltd
11 BEDFORD SQUARE
W.C.1

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
1215 EAST 58TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637
U.S.A.
LONDON: ROUTLEDGE Kegan Paul Ltd
11 BEDFORD SQUARE
W.C.1

F I V E
Additional Volumes
O F
S E R M O N S

Preached upon
Several Occasions.

By *ROBERT SOUTH, D. D.*

Late PREBENDARY of *Westminster*, and
CANON of *Christ-Church, Oxon.*

Now first Printed from the
AUTHOR'S MANUSCRIPTS.

With the
CHIEF HEADS of the SERMONS
Prefix'd to Each Volume;
AND
A GENERAL INDEX of the Principal Matters.

L O N D O N:
Printed for CHARLES BATHURST, opposite
St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet-street.
M.DCC.XLIV.

५१२

T H E
C H I E F H E A D S
O F T H E
S E R M O N S in V O L. V I I.

S E R M O N I.

EPHESIANS IV. 10. *He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.*

C H R I S T I A N I T Y, in those great matters of fact upon which it is founded, happily complies with man's mind, by affording proper objects to affect both the pensive, sad, and composed part of the soul, and also its more joyful, serene, and sprightly apprehensions; which is instanced in many passages of Christ's life, from the humble manger attended with Angels, to his descent into the grave followed by his miraculous resurrection and ascension, 1 to 3. This last great and crowning passage, however true, still affords scope for the noble actings of faith; and since faith must rest itself upon a divine word, such a word we have here in the text, 3, 4. Wherein are four things considerable;

V O L. V I I,

A

I.

I. Christ's humiliation implied in these words, *he that descended*, 4.

The *Socinians* answered concerning Christ's descent according to his divine nature, 5, 6. And an enquiry made as to the place, whither he descended, *the lower parts of the earth*; which

1. Some understand simply of the earth, as being the lowermost part of the world.
2. Some of the grave.
3. Some of hell itself, the place of the damned.
4. The *Romanists* by the help of this text have spied a place called purgatory; or rather the pope's kitchen, 8 to 5.

These words may bear the same sense with those in *Psal.* cxxxix. 15. and be very properly taken for Christ's incarnation and conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, 9; and that upon these grounds:

1. Because the former expositions have been shewn to be unnatural, forced or impertinent, and there is no other besides this assignable.

2. Since *Paul* here uses *David's* very words, it is most probable, that he used them in *David's* sense.

3. The words *descending* and *ascending* are so put together in the text, that they seem to intend a summary account of Christ's whole transaction in man's redemption, which was begun in his *conception*, and consummate in his *ascension*, 9, 10.

II. Christ's glorious advancement and exaltation, *he ascended far above all heavens*; that is, to the most eminent place of dignity and glory in the highest heaven, 10 to 13.

III. The qualification and state of Christ's person, in reference to both conditions: He was the same. *He that ascended*, &c. which evinces the unity of the two natures in the same person, 13 to 18.

IV. The end of Christ's ascension, *that he might fill all things*. All things, may refer here, 1. To the Scripture-prophecies and predictions. 2. To the church, as he might fill that with his gifts and graces. Or 3. (which interpretation is preferred,) to all things in the world, 18. which he may be said thus to fill in a double respect.

1. Of the omnipresence of his nature, and universal diffusion of his godhead, 19 to 22.

2. Of the universal rule and government of all things committed to him as mediator upon his ascension, 22 to 24.

It remains now that we transcribe this into our lives, and by being the most obedient of servants, declare Christ to be the greatest of masters.

S E R M O N II.

EPHES. iv. 10. ——— *that he might fill all things*.

These words are capable of a threefold interpretation.

1. *All things* may refer to the whole series of prophecies and predictions recorded of Christ in the Scriptures, which he may be said to *fulfill* by his ascension, 26.

St. Paul vindicated against the Jews charge of perverting the prophet's meaning in that eminent prediction, *Psalms* lxviii. 18. 27 to 29.

2. *All things* may refer to the church: which sense is here most insisted on, 29.

The church from its very nature and constitution, has unavoidably a double need or necessity, which it is Christ's prerogative to fill, 30.

A 2

R.

iv *The* CHIEF HEADS of *the*

1. In respect of its government. Hereupon he gave some apostles, some evangelists, some prophets, some pastors and teachers, 31.

2. In respect of instruction: for this Christ made a glorious provision by the diffusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, 32. In which passage two things are observable:

I. The time when. Which is remarkable in respect,

1. Of Christian religion itself, it being about its first solemn promulgation, 32 to 34.

2. Of the Apostles. It was, when they entered upon the full execution of their apostolick office, 34 to 39.

II. The manner how the Holy Ghost was conferred; namely, in the gift of tongues, 39, 40. And as these tongues were a proper representation of the gospel, so the peculiar nature and efficacy of this gospel was emphatically set forth by those attending circumstances of the fire and the mighty wind, both of which are notable for these effects, 1. To cleanse. 2. To consume and destroy, 41, 42.

S E R M O N III.

JOHN ix. latter part, vers. 4. *The night cometh when no man can work.*

The sense of the text naturally lies in three propositions.

I. That there is a work appointed to every man to be performed by him, while he lives in the world, 44.

Man as he is, 1. a part or member of the body politick, hath a temporal work, whereby he is to approve

SERMONS in VOL. VII.

approve himself a good citizen in filling the place of a divine, lawyer, &c. 44 to 48.

2. As a member and subject of a spiritual and higher kingdom, he has also a spiritual calling or profession of a Christian; and the work that this engages him to is threefold,

1. Making his peace with God, 49 to 51.

2. Getting his sins mortified, 51 to 53.

3. Getting his heart purified with the proper graces and virtues of a Christian, 53 to 55.

II. That the time of this life being once expired, there is no farther possibility of performing that work, 55.

The word by which the time of this life is expressed, *viz. a day*, may emphatically denote three things.

1. The shortness of our time. 2. The sufficiency of it for our work. 3. The determinate stint and limitation of it, 55 to 58.

III. That the consideration of this ought to be the highest argument for using the utmost diligence in the discharge of this work, 59. Which requires all our diligence; 1. From its difficulty, 59, 60.—2. From its necessity, 61 to 64.

S E R M O N IV.

Preached at the consecration of Dr. *Seth Ward*,
Bishop of *Oxon*.

JEREM. XV. 20. *I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, to save thee and deliver thee, saith the Lord.*

Presbytery, derived by some from *Jethro*, came first from *Midian*, an heathenish place. Their

elders are mentioned sometimes in the old testament, but their office not described. A superintendancy of bishops over presbyters may be argued, from the superiority of the priests over the *Levites*, much better than they can found their discipline upon the word *elder*, 65, 66. But if God instituted such a standing superiority and jurisdiction of the priest over the *Levites*, these two things follow;

1. That such a superiority is not in itself absolutely irregular and unlawful.

2. That neither does it carry in it an antipathy and contrariety to the power of godliness.

And yet upon these two suppositions, as if there was something in the very vital constitution of such a subordination irreconcilable to godliness, are all the presbyters commenced, 67, 68.

In the words are three things considerable.

I. God's qualification of *Jeremy* to be an overseer in his church; *I will make thee a fenced brazen wall.*

Now a wall imports, 1. Enclosure, 69, 70.—2. Fortification, 70, 71. This metaphor of a wall, as applied to a church-governour being explained; to make good that title, he must have, 1. Courage, 71 to 73.—2. Innocence and integrity, 73 to 75.—3. Authority, 75 to 77.

II. The opposition that the church-governour thus qualified, will be sure to meet with in his office: *they shall fight against thee.* And this they are like to do,

1. By seditious preaching and praying, 78, 79,

2. By railing and libels, 79, 80.

3. Perhaps by open force, 80 to 82.

III. The issue and success of this opposition: *They shall not prevail against thee.*

It

It is bold to foretell things future, which fall under human cognizance only two ways: 1. By a foresight of them in their causes. 2. By divine revelation. And from both these there is ground of hope to the church, 83, 84.

The arguments against this answered, 1. That the enemies of the church in the late confusion did not prevail against her: for that only is a prevailing, which is a final conquest. 2. That he who is pillaged or murdered in the resolute performance of his duty, is not properly prevailed against, 85, 86.

Wherefore the governours of the church may with confidence from the text bespeak their opposers; Who shall fight against us? it is God *that saves*, who shall destroy? it is the same God *that delivers*.

S E R M O N V, VI.

TITUS i. 1. Paul, *a servant of God, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging the truth, which is after godliness.*

The end of all philosophical enquiries, is *truth*; and of all religious institutions, *godliness*; both which are united and blended in the constitution of Christianity, 88.

I. In this expression of the gospel's being *the truth which is after godliness*, three things are couched.

1. That it is simply a truth, 89, 90.
2. That it is an operative truth, 90, 91.
3. That it operates to the best effect.

The words may have a double sense, 92.—

1. That the gospel is so called, because it actually produces the effects of godliness in those that embrace it.— 2. That it is, in its nature, the most apt and proper instrument of holiness; and the truth, which has thus an influence upon godliness, consists of two things;

1. A right notion of God.

2. A right notion of what concerns the duty of man, 93 to 96.

II. Three things are deduced from this description of the gospel, 96.

1. That the nature and prime design of religion, is to be an instrument of good life:

This cleared by these arguments. — 1. That religion designs the service of God, by gaining to his obedience man's actions and converse. —

2. It designs the salvation of man, who is not saved as he is more knowing, but as he is more pious than others, 97.— 3. That the excellency of Christianity does not consist in discovering more sublime truths, or more excellent precepts than philosophy (tho' it does this) but in suggesting better arguments to enforce the performance of those precepts, than any other religion, 98.—

4. That notwithstanding the diversity of religions, men will generally be condemned hereafter for the same things, *viz.* their breaches of morality, 99, 100.

2. That so much knowledge of truth, as is sufficient to engage men in the practice of godliness, serves the necessary ends of religion. For,

If godliness be the design, it ought also to be the measure of mens knowledge in this particular, 100.

3. That whatsoever does in itself, or its direct consequences, undermine the motives of a good life,

life, is contrary to and destructive of Christian religion.

The doctrines that more immediately concern a good life are, 101.

1. Such as concern the justification of a Sinner.

And herein the motives to holy living are subverted. — 1. By the doctrine of the covenant of grace without conditions of performance on man's part, but only to believe that he is justified: taught by the *Antinomians*, 102, 103. — 2. By the doctrine of acceptance with God, by the righteousness and merits of other saints: taught by the *Romanists*, 103 to 105.

2. Such as concern the rule of life and manners.

And here the Motives to godliness are destroyed. — 1. By that doctrine of the *Antinomians*, that exempts all believers from the obligation of the moral law, 105 to 108. — 2. By that doctrine of the church of *Rome*, which asserts any sin to be, in its nature, *venial*, 108 to 110. The church of *Rome* herein resembling the *Jewish* church corrupted by the *Pharisees*, who distinguished the commandments into the *great* and the *small*, 110 to 112. — 3. By the *Romish* doctrine of superelevation, 113 to 116. — 4. By that doctrine, that places it in the power of any mere mortal man to dispense with the laws of Christ, so as to discharge any man from being obliged by them, 116 to 121.

3. Such as relate to repentance.

The doctrine of repentance may be perverted in a double respect:

1. In respect of the time of it: as is done by the *Romish* casuists, who say, that a man is bound to repent of his sins *once*, but when that *once* shall be, he may determine as he thinks fit, 121 to 126.

2.

— 2. As to the measure of it. The *Romish* doctrine considered in this respect, and refuted, 126 to 130.

The improvement of all lies in two things :

1. To convince us how highly it concerns all, but especially the most knowing, to try the doctrines that they believe, and to let enquiry usher in faith, 130, 131.

2. It suggests also the sure marks, by which we may try them. As, 1. It is not the pleasingness or suitableness of a doctrine to our tempers or interests ; nor, 2. The general or long reception of it ; nor, 3. The godliness of the preacher or asserter of any doctrine, that is a sure mark of the truth of it : but if it naturally tends to promote the fear of God in men's hearts, and to engage them in virtuous courses, it carries with it the mark and impress of the great eternal truth, 131 to 134.

SERMONS VII. VIII. IX.

PROVERBS XXIX. 5. *A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet*

The words being plain, the matter contained in them is prosecuted under three general heads, 136.

I. What flattery is, and wherein it does consist.

Though we cannot reach all the varieties of it, the general ways are,

1. Concealing or dissembling the defects or vices of any person, 136 to 139. And here are shewn two things:

First,

First, Who they are that are concerned to speak in this case. Namely, 1. Such as are entrusted with the government of others, 139. — 2. Persons set apart to the work of the ministry, 140. — 3. Those that profess friendship, 141, 142.

Secondly, The manner how they are to speak. As, 1. The reproof should be given in secret, 142 to 145. — 2. With due respect to, and distinction of the condition of the person reproofed, 145 to 150. — 3. With words of meekness and commiseration, 150 to 155. — 4. That the reproof be not continued or repeated after amendment of the occasion, 155 to 157.

2. The *second* way of flattery, is the praising and defending the defects or vices of any person, 177 to 180.

Under this species, the distinction between a *religious* and a *political* conscience observed, and censured, 180 to 182. And two sorts of men charged as the most detestable flatterers :

1. Such as upon principles of enthusiasm assure persons of eminence and high place, that those transgressions are allowable in them, that are absolutely prohibited and condemned in others, 183 to 185.

2. The *Romish* casuists, who persuade the world, that many actions, which have hitherto passed for impious and unlawful, admit of such qualifications as clear them of all guilt, 185, 186.

This kind of flattery is of most mischievous consequence, and of very easy effect. 1. From the nature of man, 187. — 2. From the very nature of vice itself, 188.

3. The *third* kind of flattery is, the perverse imitation of any one's defects or vices, 188 to 192.

xii *The* CHIEF HEADS *of the*

4. The *fourth* consists, in over-valuing those virtues and perfections, that are really laudable in any person, 192 to 195.

II. The grounds and occasions of flattery, on his part that is flattered.

Three mentioned. 1. Greatness of place or condition, 158 to 161 — 2. An angry, passionate disposition, and impatient of reproof, 161 to 164. — 3. A proud and vain-glorious disposition, 164 to 167.

III. The ends and designs of the flatterer. *He spreads a net for his neighbour's feet.*

The flatterer is influenced by these two grand purposes ;

1. To serve himself, 168 to 171.

2. To undermine him whom he flatters, and thereby to effect his ruin, 171. Which he does, 1. As he deceives him, and grossly abuses and perverts his judgement, which should be the guide of all his actions, 172. — 2. He brings him to shame and a general contempt, 173, 174. He effects his ruin ; forasmuch as by this means he renders his recovery and amendment impossible, 175, 176.

S E R M O N X. XI. XII.

PSALM XIX. 13. first part. *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me.*

These words suggest three things to our consideration.

1. The thing prayed against, *presumptuous sins,*

2.

2. The person making this prayer ; one adorned with the highest elogies for his piety, even by God himself.

3. The means he engages for his deliverance ; namely, the divine grace and assistance, 196.

The words are discussed under two general heads.

I. Shewing what these presumptuous sins are.

II. Shewing the reason of this so holy person's praying so earnestly against them.

The first head is handled in three things.

I. Shewing in general what it is to presume, 197.

The scripture-description of presumption. Three parts go to make up a presumptuous sin. 1. That a man undertake an action, known by him to be unlawful, or at least doubtful. 2. That notwithstanding, he promise to himself security from any punishment of right consequent upon it. 3. That he do this upon motives utterly groundless and unreasonable, 198, 199.

The presumptuous sinner is divested of the two only pleas for the extenuation of sin. As, 1. Ignorance, 200 to 202. — 2. Surprise, 203 to 205.

Distinction between sins of *presumption* and sins of *infirmity*.

Three opinions concerning a sin of infirmity, 205: The

1st, Derives the nature of it from the condition of the agent ; affirming that every sin committed by a believer, or a person truly regenerate, is a sin of infirmity. This doctrine is considered and refuted, 205 to 208.

2. Some, from the matter of the action ; as that it is committed only in *thought or desire*, or perhaps

haps in *word*. To this is answered, 1. That there is no act producible by the soul of man under the power of his will, but it is capable of being a sin of presumption, 209. — 2. The voice of God in scripture is loud against this opinion, 210.

3. Some, from the principle immediately producing the action, *viz.* that the will is carried to the one by malice, to the other by inadvertency, 211.

But for our better conduct is shewn, first negatively, *what is not* a sin of infirmity : As, 1. When a man ventures and designs to commit a sin upon this ground, that he judges it a sin of infirmity. 2. That sin, tho' in itself never so small, that a man, after the committing of it, is desirous to excuse or extenuate, 212. — 2. Positively *what is* : namely, a sin committed out of mere sudden inadvertency, that inadvertency not being directly caused by any deliberate sin immediately going before it, 213, 214.

II. Assigning some of the most notable kinds of presumptuous sins, 215. As,

1. Sin against the goodness of God, manifesting itself to a man in great prosperity, 216 to 219.

2. Sins committed under God's judging and afflicting hand, 219 to 222.

3. Committing a sin clearly discovered, and directly pointed at by the word of God, either written or preached, 222 to 224.

4. Committing a sin against passages of providence, particularly threatening the commission of it, 225, 226.

5. Sins against the inward checks and warnings of conscience, 227 to 229.

6. Sins against that inward *taste, relish, and complacency*, that men have found in their attempts to walk with God, 229 to 231.

7. The returning to, and repeated commission of the same sin, 231 to 234.

III. Proposing some remedies against these sins. As,

1. Let a man endeavour to fix in his heart, a deep apprehension and persuasion of the transcendent evil of the nature of sin in general, 236 to 239.

2. Let him most seriously consider, and reflect upon God's justice, 239 to 241.

3. Let him consider, how much such offences would exasperate even men, 241 to 243.

Second general head: Shewing the reason of the Psalmist's so earnest praying against these sins, 243.

The prosecution of the first head might be argument enough: but yet for a more full discussion of the point, these further reasons, which might induce him to it, are considered.

1. The danger of falling into these sins. 1. From the nature of man, which is apt to be confident, 244.— 2. From the object of presumption, God's mercy, 245. — 3. From the tempter, who chiefly concerns himself to engage men in this kind of sin, 246 to 248.

2. The sad consequences of them if fallen into. Amongst which are, 1. Their marvellous aptness to grow upon him, that gives way to them, 248 to 250.— 2. That of all others they prove the most difficult in their cure, 250 to 252.— 3. They waste the conscience infinitely more than any other sins, 252, 253. — 4. They have always

ways been followed by God with greater and fiercer judgements than any others, 253 to 257.

S E R M O N XIII.

PSALM CXXXIX. 3. *Thou compassedst my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.*

The metaphorical expressions in the text being explained, 259 to 261. this doctrinal observation is gathered from it; *viz.*

That God knows, and takes strict and accurate notice of the most secret and retired passages of a man's life; which is proved by reasons of two sorts.

I. Such as prove that it is so, that God knows the most secret passages of our lives, 262.

1. He observes them, because he rules and governs them, 262. Which he does three ways; 1. By discovering them. 2. By preventing of them, 263. — 3. By directing them for other ends, than those for which they were intended, 264, 265.

2. Because he gives laws to regulate them, 266.

3. Because he will judge them, 267. — First, in this life, wherein he often gives the sinner a fore-taste of what he intends to do in the future, 268. — 2. At the day of judgement, 269.

II. Such reasons as show whence it is that God takes such notice of them.

He observes all hidden things :

1. From his omniscience, or power of knowing all things, 270, 271.

2. From his intimate presence to the nature and being of all things, 272.

The application of the whole lies in shewing the uses it may afford us : which are,

1. A *use* of conviction, to convince all presumptuous sinners of the atheism of their hearts, 274, 275.

2d *use*. It speaks terror to all secret sinners, 276, 277. Now secret sins are of two sorts, both of which God perfectly knows. As,

1. The sins of our thoughts and desires, 277, 278. And he will judge of men by these, 1. Because they are most spiritual, and consequently most opposite to the nature of God, 279, 280.

2. Because man's actions and practice may be over-ruled, but thoughts and desires are the natural and genuine offspring of the soul, 281 to 284.

2. Such sins, as are not only transacted in the mind, but also by the body, yet are covered from the view of men, 284, 285.

3. As God's omniscience is a terror to secret sinners, so it speaks no less comfort to all sincere-hearted Christians, 285 to 287.

S E R M O N XIV.

ECCLESIAST. VII. 10. *Say not thou, what is the cause that former days were better than these ; for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.*

In the days of *Soloman*, when *Jerusalem* was the glory of the whole earth, these *complaints of the times* were made ; and yet a little backward in the calendar, we have nothing but tumults, changes, and vicissitudes, 288, 289.

The words run in the form of a question, yet include a positive assertion, and a downright censure. The enquiry being determined before it was proposed, now the charge of folly, here laid upon it, may relate to the supposition, upon which it is founded, in a threefold respect; *viz.*

I. Of a peremptory negation, as a thing absolutely to be denied, that former times are better than the following.

II. As of a case very disputable, whether they are so or no.

III. As admitting the supposition for true, that they are better.

In every one of which respects this enquiry ought to be exploded. And,

1. That it is ridiculous to ask, why former times are better than the present, if they really are not so, 291, 292. And that they are not, is evinced, 1. From reason, 293.—2. From history and the records of antiquity, 294 to 297.

II. Supposing the case disputable: which being argued, 1. On the side of antiquity, 297, 298.—2. Of succeeding times, 299 to 301. This enquiry is shewn to be unreasonable,

1. In respect of the nature of the thing itself, 301.

2. In respect of the incompetence of any man living to judge in this controversy, 302, 303.

III. Supposing it true, that former times are really best; this querulous reflection is foolish,

1. Because such complaints have no efficacy to alter or remove the cause of them, 303, 304.

2. Because they only quicken the smart, and add to the pressure, 305, 306.

3. Because the just cause of them is resolvable into ourselves, 306, &c.

S. E. R.

S E R M O N XV.

MATTH. V. 25, 26. *Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.*

Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

In these words, Christ enforces the duty of an amicable concord and agreement betwixt brethren, from the unavoidable misery of those obstinate wretches, that persist in and perpetuate an injury, 312.

Some understand the words in a literal, some in a figurative sense, 313.

The several terms therein explained in the spiritual sense of them; according to which, by the word *adversary* is meant the divine law, or a man's own conscience, as commissioned by that law.—By *the way*, the time of this life, or rather the present opportunities of repentance.—By *judge*, the great God of heaven.—By *officer*, the devil.—By *prison*, hell.—By *paying the utmost farthing*, the guilty persons being dealt with according to the utmost rigour and extremity of justice, 313 to 316.

The text is parabolical, and includes both senses. For the better understanding which, a parable is explained to contain two parts. (1.) The material, literal part, contained in the bare words. (2.) The formal, spiritual part, or application of the parable; which is sometimes expressed, and sometimes understood, as in this place, 316 to 319.

The sense of the text is presented under three conclusions, 318.

1. That the time of this life is the only time for a sinner to make his peace with God.

2. That this consideration ought to be a prevailing unanswerable argument to engage and quicken his repentance.

3. That if a sinner lets this pass, he irrecoverably falls into an estate of utter perdition.

The second conclusion, the subject of this discourse, the truth whereof made appear three ways.

I. By comparing the shortness of life with the difficulty of this work of repentance, 319 to 322.

The difficulty of repentance appears,

1. Because a man is to clear himself of an injury done to an infinite offended justice, to appease an infinite wrath, and an infinite provoked majesty, 323 to 325.

2. Because a man is utterly unable of himself to give God any thing by way of just compensation or satisfaction, 326, 327.

II. By comparing the uncertainty of life with the necessity of the work, 328 to 331.

III. By considering the sad and fatal doom, that will infallibly attend the neglect of it, 331.

The misery and terror of this doom consists in two things: 1. That it cannot be avoided, 332, 333.—2. That it cannot be revoked, 333 to 336.

Application in urging over the same duty from another argument, namely, that so long as there is enjoyment of a temporal life, there may be just hope of an eternal. Therefore *kiss the son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way*, 336, 337.

N. B. By a mistake of the Printer, SERMONS VIII and IX, upon the subject of Flattery, in this Volume, are transposed. SERMON IX. should have been placed before SERMON VIII. of which the Reader will be pleased to take notice.

SERMON I.

S E R M O N I.

EPHESIANS IV. 10.

*He that descended is the same also
that ascended far above all heavens,
that he might fill all things.*

IF religion were not to bear only upon the unshakeable bottom of divine authority, but we might propose to ourselves in idea what could be fittest to answer and employ those faculties of man's mind that are capable of religious obligation; reason would contrive such a religion as should afford both sad and solemn objects to amuse and affect the pensive part of the soul, and also such glorious matter and bright representations as might feed its admiration, and entertain its more sprightly apprehensions: for the temper of all men in the world is either sad and composed, or joyful and serene; and even the same man will find, that he is wholly acted, in the general tenor of his life, by the vicissitude and interchange of these dispositions.

Accordingly Christianity, in those great mat-
* ters

ters of fact upon which it is founded, happily complies with man's mind by this variety of its subject. For we have both the sorrows and the glories of Christianity, the depressions and the triumphs, the mournings and the hallelujahs: we have the affecting sadneses of Christ's fasting, his bloody agony, his crucifixion, and the bitter scene of his whole passion in its several parts and appendages. On the other side we gaze at his miracles, admire his transfiguration, joy at his supernatural resurrection, and (that which is the great complement and consummation of all) his glorious ascension.

The fixed sort of these naturally suit with the composed, fixed, and monastic disposition of some minds, averse from all complacency and freedom; the second invite the joys of serene minds, happier constitutions, and brisker meditations.

Nay, such a divine checker-work shall we find in the whole contexture of the story of our religion, that we have the light still with the advantage of the shade, and things exhibited with the recommending vicinity of their contraries; so that it is observed, that in the whole narrative of our Saviour's life, no passage is related of him low or weak, but it is immediately seconded, and as it were corrected, by another high and miraculous.

No sooner was Christ humbled to a manger, but the contempt of the place was took off with the glory of the attendance, in the mini-

ministration of angels. His submission to that mean and coarse ceremony of circumcision was ennobled with the public attestation of Simeon concerning him: his fasting and temptation attended with another service of angels: his baptism with a glorious recognition by a voice from heaven. When he seemed to show weakness in seeking fruit upon that fig-tree that had none; he manifested his power, by cursing it to deadness with a word: when he seemed to be overpowered at his attachments, he then exerted his mightiness, in causing his armed adversaries to fall backwards, and healing Malchus's ear with a touch. When he underwent the last and violent infamy of crucifixion and death; then did the universal frame of nature give testimony to his divinity, the temple rending, the sun darkning, and the earth quaking, the whole creation seemed to sympathize with his passion. And when afterwards he seemed to be in the very kingdom and dominions of death, by descending into the grave; he quickly confuted the dishonour of that, by an astonishing resurrection, and by an argument *ex abundanti*, proved the divinity of his person over and over in an equally miraculous ascension.

Which great and crowning passage of all that went before it; however it is most true, and therefore most worthily to be assented to, yet still it affords scope for the nobler and higher actings of faith. For reason certainly would now very hardly be induced to be-

lieve that upon bare testimony and report; which, even those who then saw it with their eyes, that is, with the greatest instruments of evidence, scarcely gave credit to.

For it is expressly remarked in *Matt. xxviii. 17.* that of those who stood and beheld his ascension, though *some worshipped*, yet *others doubted*.

It seems, things were not so clear as to answer all the objections of their eyes, or at least of their incredulity. But he ascended *in a cloud*, as it is said; there was some darkness, something of mists and obscurity that did attend him. Yet a lively potent faith will scatter all such clouds, dispel such mists, conquer this and much greater difficulties. Which faith since it must rest itself upon a divine word, such a word we have here; and that a full, a pregnant, and a satisfying word, which from the pen of a person infallibly inspired, assures us, that *he who descended, is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things*.

In the words, we have these four things considerable.

I. Christ's humiliation intimated and implied in those words, *he that descended*.

II. His glorious advancement and exaltation, *he ascended far above all heavens*.

III. The qualification and state of his person in reference to both these conditions; he was the same. *He that descended is the same also that ascended*.

IV. The

IV. The end of his exaltation and ascension, *that he might fill all things.*

Of all which in their order: And when I shall have have traversed each of these distinctly, I hope I shall have reached both the full sense of the text, and the business of the day.

I. And first of all for Christ's humiliation and descension. As every motion is bounded with two periods and terms; the one relinquished, the other to be acquired by it; so in Christ's descension we are to consider both the place from which it did commence, and the place to which it did proceed: The place from whence, we are told, was heaven.

But the difficulty is, how Christ could descend from thence: According to his divine nature he could not; for, as God, he filled the universe; and all motion supposes the mover to be sometimes out of the place to which he moves; and successively to acquire a presence to it; so that nothing that adequately fills a place, can move in that place, unless it moves circularly, but progressively or in a direct line it is impossible. Whither then should the divine nature move where it is not prevented by its own ubiquity? whither should it go where it is not already? And as for Christ's human nature, that could not descend from heaven; for as much as it was not first in heaven, but received its first being, and existence here upon earth.

This argumentation we see is clear and undeniable, how then shall we make out Christ's descension?

The Socinians, who allow Christ nothing but an human nature, affirm, that he is said to *descend from heaven*, only in respect of the divinity of his original and production; as it is elsewhere said, that *every good and perfect gift descends from above*, namely, because it is derived from a divine principle. But his *descending* being here in the text opposed to his *ascending*, clearly shews, that there is a farther and more literal meaning imported in the word.

I answer therefore that Christ descended according to his divine nature; not indeed by a proper and local motion, as the former arguments sufficiently demonstrate; but because it united itself to a nature here below; in respect of which union to an earthly nature it might metaphorically be said to descend to the place, where that nature did reside: And thus much for the way and manner how Christ did descend.

We are now to direct our next enquiry to the place whither he descended, and for this we are to reflect an eye upon the former verse of this chapter, which tells us, that it was into the *lower parts of the earth*; but what those *lower parts of the earth* are, here lies the doubt, and here must be the explication.

There are several opinions to be passed through, before we can come to the truth. I shall

shall propose them all, that every one may be his own judge, which of them carries in it the greatest probability.

1. Some understand it simply of the earth, as being the lowermost part of the world. But why then could not the Apostle have said, that Christ descended εἰς τὰ κατώτερα τῆ κόσμου, and not τῆς γῆς, to the lower parts of the *world*, not of the *earth*? but to call the earth the *lower part* of itself, is an apparent violence to the naturalness of the expression, and indeed not more forced, than ridiculous.

2. Some understand it of the grave, which is called the heart of the earth, in *Matt. xii. 40. The son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* Now the heart or middle of the earth is the lowest part of it; for as much as every progression beyond that, is an access nearer to heaven, which encloses and surrounds the whole earth, and the nearer we come to heaven, the higher we are said to go; but this exposition is more artificial than natural; more ingenious than solid, and only to be valued as we do those things that are far fetched.

3. Some understand it of hell itself, the place of the damned; and our creed tells us, that Christ descended into hell: but to this I answer; that it relates not at all to our present purpose, whether Christ descended into hell or no; but the thing to be proved is, that hell or the place of the damned, is the lower parts of the earth; which we deny, as being con-

trary both to the judgment of the church, and of reason; it being hard to conceive what capacity there can be within the earth, for the reception not only of the souls, but of the bodies of all the persons, that for six thousand years shall have peopled the world; the number only of those who shall be saved (which we are told are very few) being *excepted*.

4. But 4thly, the quick sighted Romanists, (forsooth) who can see further into the earth than other men, have by the help of this text spied in it a place called purgatory; or rather the pope's kitchen, for certain it is that nothing so much feeds his table. Now here, they say, are *those lower parts of the earth*, whither Christ descended; but before they prove that Christ came down hither, I would have them prove that there is such a place.

They say they prove it from 1 Pet. iii. 19. where it is said, *that Christ by his spirit went and preached to the spirits in prison*; the words in the Greek are, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι παρευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν. But do these words imply that those spirits were in prison at that time that he preached to them? not at all, but the entire sense of them is this: *He preached to the spirits in prison*; that is, Christ in the days of Noah, by his spirit preached to; and strove with, those disobedient spirits which spirits are now *in prison*, or in hold, for so ἐν φυλακῇ signifies, that is, they are *held in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day*;

as,

S E R M O N I.

9

as, suppose I should say, that *Christ preached to many hundred souls in hell*, does it follow hence, that they were in hell while he preached to them? no, but it must be took in a divided sense, that many hundreds, who are now in hell, were once preached to by Christ.

And thus having shewn the nullity of this argument, I think it is clear, that Christ descended not into purgatory, for that which is not, cannot be descended into: but I wonder why men should be so solicitous in finding out a purgatory: for if they go not to heaven, they need not doubt, but that there is room enough in hell, without providing themselves of a third place.

5. In the fifth and last place therefore, I conceive these words in the text, to bear the same sense with, and perhaps to have reference to those in *Psal. cxxxix. 15.* where *David* speaking of his conception in his mother's womb, *says, that he was framed and fashioned in the lowest parts of the earth.* In like manner, Christ's descending into the lowest parts of the earth, may very properly be taken for his incarnation and conception in the womb of the blessed virgin.

That this is so, yet with submission to better judgments, I judge upon these grounds.

1. Because the former expositions have been clearly shewn to be, some of them, unnatural and forced, and others impertinent: but those four being removed, there is no other besides this assignable,

2. It

2. It is usual for the apostles to transcribe and use the Hebrew phrases of the old Testament: and since Paul here uses David's very words, it is most probable, that he used them in David's sense.

3. I add, that these words of Christ's *descending* and *ascending*, are so put together in the text, that they seem to intend us a summary account of Christ's whole transaction of that great work of man's redemption from first to last; which being begun in his *conception*, and consummate in his *ascension*, by what better can his descending be explained, than by his conception, the first part and instance of this great work, as his ascension was the last? So that by this explication the apostles words are cast into this easy and proper sense, that the same Christ, and eternal son of God, who first condescended and debased himself so far, as to be incarnate and conceived in the flesh, was he who afterwards ascended into heaven, and was advanced to that pitch of sublime honour and dignity, far above the principalities and powers of men and angels.

And thus much for the first thing, Christ's humiliation and descension, both as to the manner how, and the place whither he did descend.

II. I come now in the next place to consider his exaltation and ascension. For shall he so leave his glory, as never to re-assume it? Shall

S E R M O N I. 11

Shall such a sun-beam strike the earth, and not rebound?

As for the way and manner how he ascended; I affirm, that it was according to his human nature, properly and by local motion; but according to his divine, only by communication of properties, the action of one nature being ascribed to both, by virtue of their union in the same person.

As for the place to which he advanced, it is, says the apostle, *far above all heavens*. In the exposition of which words it is strange to consider the puerile fondness of some expositors; who will needs have the sense of them to be, that Christ ascended above the empyrean heaven, the highest of all the rest, and there sits enthroned in the convexity and outside of it, like a man sitting upon a globe. For, say they, otherwise, how could Christ be said to have ascended *above the heavens*? But if they will stick to this term *above*, let them also stick to the other, *far above*, and then they must not place him just upon the empyrean heaven; but imagine him strangely pendulous, in those *spatia extramundana*, those empty spaces that are supposed to be beyond the world. How improper, and indeed romantick, these conceits are, you easily discern.

But the words of the text have something of figure, of hyperbole, and latitude in them; and signify not, according to their literal niceness, a going *above the heavens* by a local

super-

superiority ; but an advance to the most eminent place of dignity and glory in the highest heaven.

Besides, the very common use of the word does not of necessity enforce the former interpretation ; for we think we say properly enough, that a man is upon the top of an house or tower, if he be but in one of the uppermost parts of it, without his standing upon the weather-cock : but it is the usual fate of such over scrupulous adherers to words and letters, to be narrow men, and bad interpreters.

I have nothing else to add for explication of Christ's ascension, but only to observe and adore God's great and wise methods of exalting, exemplified to us by an instance in his dearest son. He, we see, is depressed before advanced, crucified before enthroned, and led through the vale of tears, to the region of eucharist and hallelujahs. He was punished with one crown, before he was rewarded with another, and disciplined by the hardships of shame and servitude to the glories of a kingdom.

And do we now think to have our whole course spun in one even thread ? to live deliciously in one world, as well as gloriously in another ? to tread softly, and to walk upon paths of roses to the mansions of eternal felicities ?

No ; it is the measure of our happiness, and ought to be so of our wish too, to be but like

like Christ. The preferments of heaven will be sure to meet us only in the state of an afflicted abject humility. Christ preached upon the mountain, but he lived and acted his sermons in the valley.

The way of salvation must needs be opposite to that of damnation. We must (as I may so speak) descend to heaven; for it was *Adam's* aspiring that brought him down, and *Lucifer's* fall was but the consequent of his ascension.

III. I come now to the third thing, which is the qualification and state of Christ's person, in reference to both these conditions: He was the same. *He that descended is the same also that ascended.* Which to me seems a full argument to evince the unity of the two natures in the same person: since two several actions are ascribed to the same person, both of which, it is evident, could not be performed by the same nature.

As for Christ's descending, I shew that it could not be by his human nature; for that received its first existence on earth, and therefore could not come down from heaven; but it was to be understood of his divine nature though improperly, and only so, as it became united to a nature here below: but, as for *his ascending*, it is clear that Christ did this by his human nature, and that properly and literally; and yet it is here affirmed, *that it was the same Christ who both ascended and descended*; a great proof

proof of that mysterious œconomy of two natures in one hypostasis.

The school of Socinus, we have heard, affirms Christ to have descended from heaven, only in respect of his divine and heavenly origination: but how according to their opinion can they make it out, that it was the same Christ who ascended? for they affirm concerning the body which he had before his death and after his resurrection here upon earth, that he did not carry that with him into heaven, but that was left here behind whether by annihilation, or some secret conveyance of it into the earth by the power of God, they tell us not, nor indeed know themselves; but in the room of it, they say, he had a spiritual ethereal body, with which he ascended into heaven; a body without flesh and bones, a refined, sublimated, angelical body; which are words enough I confess, but where the sense is, we may go seek. I wonder, they do not farther explain their subtile notion, and say, that it is a certain body without corporeity.

But though they will not allow the union of two complete natures in the same person; yet they, and all the world must grant, that two distinct substances, the soul and the body, go to compound and integrate the man: and and I know, according to their usual appellation of him, they will allow him to be *the man Christ Jesus*.

Now I demand of them upon what principles of reason or philosophy, they will prove
that

that to be the same compound; when one entire half, that goes to the making of it, is wholly another thing. When we take white, and mingling it with red, make a third distinct colour; if we could now separate that white from the red, and join it to a blue, do we think that this conjunction would make the same kind of colour that the former mixture did? In like manner can I affirm, that the same soul successively united to two several bodies of a kind wholly diverse, if not opposite, makes the very same compound? If the whole be nothing else but its parts united, essential parts totally changed, I am sure, cannot be the same whole.

Neither let them reply, that this argument favours too much of philosophy, for by saying so, they say only that it favours too much of reason.

I confess there are some passages that fell out after Christ's resurrection, that seem to persuade us, that the body, he then appeared in, was not of the same nature with our bodies now a-days, nor with that which he himself had before his death: for we read, that *he vanished out of some of the disciples sight, and that he came into them, the doors being shut.*

Which considerations, I suppose, drove Origen to assert, that Christ's soul had such a command over his body, and his body such a ductility to comply with those commands, that the soul could contract or expand it, into
what

what compass, or transfigure it into what shape it pleased; so as to command it through a chink, or crevice, or represent it, sometimes under one form, sometimes under another.

But to this I answer, that however Christ's body, as every body else, is capable of continuing the same, notwithstanding the alteration of its qualities and outward form; yet, that a body of such a dimension should be contracted to such a thinness, as to pass through a chink or crevice, cannot be effected without a penetration of the parts, and a mutual sinking into one another: which those who understand the nature of body, know to be a contradiction, and consequently impossible.

As for those scriptures which seem to give colour to the opinion that Christ, after his resurrection, had such an aerial phantastic body, before I answer them, I shall premise that great instance and affirmation that Christ gave of the reality of his body, to his disciples, being frightened at his presence, and supposing they had seen a spirit or apparition, *Luke xxiv. 38, 39. Why (says he) do such thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.* What could be more plain and positive for the clearing of this particular? Certain it is therefore, that he had the very same body, be the explication, of

of other places that seem to imply the contrary never so difficult.

The first is in *Luke xxiv. 31. He vanished out of their sight.* To which I answer, that it is not at all absurd, to affirm, that Christ, by his divine power, might cast a mist before their eyes; or suspend the actings of their visive faculty in reference to himself, while he conveyed himself in the mean time away; or possibly he might depart with so quick a motion, that it was almost instantaneous, and so indiscernible: for either the exceeding quickness or slowness of motion, makes the successive progress of it not observable to the eye, as is manifest from an hundred daily experiments.

For the second place in *John xx. 19.* where it is said, that *he came amongst his disciples the doors being shut*: this is capable of an explanation that is obvious, and removes all difficulty. For it is not to be understood of the doors being shut in the very act of his entrance, but just antecedently to it; that is, Christ coming to the place found the doors shut; yet notwithstanding, by his immediate power, he caused them to fly open, as the angel did the prison doors at the release of Peter, *Acts xii.* and then he entered. Thus we read, that the *lame walk*, the *blind see*; not indeed while they continued lame and blind, but the lame and blind were first cured of those infirmities, and so made to *walk* and *see*.

So Christ did not enter, the doors continuing shut, but the doors that he found fast shut, he by a strange power opened, and so came amongst his disciples, which was enough to affright and amaze them.

But to reduce this to a familiar instance: Suppose a stranger, or suspicious person should come into an house, and the master of the house should ask his servant, whether the doors were shut, or open, when he came in? Surely his meaning is not, did he pass *through* the door while it was shut? But his sense is, did he find the door shut, and so broke it open, or did he find the door standing open, and so entered? This exposition is natural, and so clears the doubt, that the difficulty itself vanishes, and is but an apparition; and *so much for the third thing.*

4. I proceed now to the fourth and last thing. Which is the end of Christ's ascension, *that he might fill all things.*

This also is capable of various interpretation, for this term *all things*, may refer,

1. Either to the scripture, that he might fill, or rather fulfill (for the Greek πληρώ signifies both) all those prophecies and predictions recorded of him in the books of the prophets.

2. Or secondly, it may refer to the church, that he might fill all things belonging to that, with his gifts and graces; for it is subjoined that he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers;

ers; for the perfecting of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ: Both these expositions I confess are probable. But,

3. In the third place, it may relate *to all things* in the world, within the whole compass of heaven and earth; and since the words so taken, afford us an eminent proof, both of Christ's essential deity, as also of the power with which he was endued as mediator: we shall not let so great a prize slip out of our hands, but prefer and follow this as the most genuine interpretation.

Now Christ may be said thus to *fill all things* in a double respect.

1. In respect of the omnipresence of his nature and universal diffusion of his godhead. The schools in stating the manner how one thing is in another, whereas they make bodies present by *circumscription*, finite spirits *definitive*, that is, by being so here, as at the same time not to be there: not improperly, I think, make God to be in all things by repletion: that is, he is so *in them*, that they are rather *in him*; spreading such an immense fulness over all things, as in a manner swallows and folds them up within himself.

Such a fulness has Christ as God, by which he fills, or rather overflows the universe, *et ad omnia præsentialiter se habet*. Could there be a more full and apposite proof of this than that place, *John* iii. 13. *No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man,*

which is in heaven. He came down from heaven, and at that time was talking with Nicodemus upon earth; and yet even then he was still in heaven. How? But by the omnipresence of his divine nature, that scorned the poor limitations of place, diffused an immense presence every where, and could be in heaven without ascending thither.

But what I say of Christ, as to his *divine nature*, should I assert the same of his *human*, it would be both an error in divinity, and a prodigious paradox in philosophy.

Yet the Romanist will have Christ's whole body to be in ten thousand places together, and at once; namely, wheresoever their host is celebrated, and in every particle of that host; which certainly is the greatest absurdity, and most portentous piece of nonsense that ever was owned in the face of the rational world.

And the Lutherans, who by a dough-baked reformation, striking off from the Romish errors, have rather *changed* than *corrected* this grand absurdity, they assert a consubstantiation, and the consequent of it, the ubiquity of Christ's humane nature.

But certainly they have some unanswerable arguments, that force their assent to such uncouth propositions. What they are, we shall hear. They argue thus:

Christ, in respect of his human nature, sits at God's right hand; but God's right hand is every where, and consequently Christ's human nature must be so too.

If

If I might answer a foolish argument according to its folly, I might demand of them, if God's right hand be every where, where then will they place his left? But do not they know that Christ's sitting at God's right hand is not taken in a metaphysical sense, for his co-existence with it? but is only a phrase, importing God's advancing him to high dignity and honour, as princes use to place their favourites at their right hand.

But they proceed. If Christ's human nature be united to the whole divine nature, then wheresoever his divine nature is present, there must be also his human. But supposing that his human nature is not every where, and that his divine is, then in those places, where the human nature is not, the divine is there without it; and so consequently in those places it is not united to it: for things intimately united, must be present together in the same places.

But what pitiful thin sophistry is this! whatever at the first sight it may appear: for they distinguish not a spiritual union from that which is corporeal, and between things having quantity. If indeed, Christ's human nature were united to his divine, by way of adequate commensuration, one to the other, it would then follow, that if one was where the other is not, the union so far would cease; but the union between these two natures is only by intimate indissoluble relation one to the other; so that wheresoever the divine nature

nature of Christ is present, though his human is not there present too, yet it still holds the same relation to it, as to a thing joined with it in one and the same subsistence. And so much in answer to a sophistical argument brought to defend a mishapen monstrous assertion.

We see here the first way, how Christ fills all things in the world; namely, by the essential omnipresence of his divine nature. But yet this is not the *filling all things* directly intended in the text; for that was to be consequent to his ascension; *he ascended that he might fill all things*; it accrued to him upon and after his ascension, not before; but his omnipresential filling all things being an inseparable property of his divine nature, always agreed to him, and was not then at length to be conferred on him.

2. In the second place therefore, Christ may be said to fill all things, in respect of the universal rule and government of all things in heaven and earth committed to him as mediator upon his ascension. This is the only *filling all things*, that the school of Socinus will allow him; forasmuch as they make him to be God only by *office* not by *nature*; and that his full deity bears date from his ascension; at which time he took possession of the government of the world.

But in this, I must confess, they are so much the less injurious to Christ: since they allow the Father himself to fill all things no otherwise: they acknowledge him indeed to have such an extent

of

of power as to reach all places, persons, and things; but his omnipresence they deny, and confine his being to a circumscribed residence within the highest heaven; as we may see in Crellius's book *De attributis Dei*, chap. 1. So little ought we to wonder at their denying the deity of the Son, when they have even torn the fairest perfections out of the godhead of the Father.

But to look back upon Christ, now enjoying the end of his ascension even the sovereignty of all things. This is he, that is now king of kings, and lord of lords, who weilds the scepter of heaven and earth, and wears the imperial crown of the universe. Heaven is his throne, and the thrones of kings his footstool.

He now shines in the head of that glorious army of martyrs, and wearing the trophies of conquered sin and death, possesses the kingdom of the world, by the two unquestionable titles of conquest and inheritance. The angels, those immediate retainers to the almighty, and ministers of providence, are his attendants, they hear his will and execute his commands with a quick and a winged alacrity.

All the elements, the whole train and retinue of nature are subservient to his pleasure, and instruments of his purposes. The stars fight in their courses under his banner, and subordinate their powers to the dictates of his will. The heavens rule all below them by

their influences, but themselves are governed by his. He can command nature out of its course, and reverse the great ordinances of the creation.

The government, the stress and burden of all things lies upon his hands. The blind heathen have been told of an Atlas that shoulders up the heavens; but we know that he who supports the heavens, is not under them, but above them.

And to give you yet a greater instance of his sovereignty, he extends his dominion even to man's will, that great seat of freedom, that with a kind of autocracy and supremacy within itself, commands its own actions, laughs at all compulsion, scorns restraint, and defies the bondage of human laws or external obligations.

Yet this, even this absolute principle, bends to the over-powering insinuations of Christ's spirit; nay, with a certain event, and yet with a reserve to its own inviolate liberty, when he calls, it cannot but be willing. My earthly prince may command my estate, my body, and the services of my hand, but it is Christ only that can command my will: this is his peculiar and prerogative.

It remains now that we transcribe this article of our creed into our lives, express his sovereignty in our subjection; and by being the most obedient of servants declare him to be the greatest of masters.

Even

S E R M O N I. 25

Even the blessed and only potentate, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.

To whom with the Father and the holy Spirit be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty and dominion both now and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

EPHESIANS iv. 10.

— *that he might fill all things.*

THESE words exhibit to us the great end and design of Christ's ascension, and without any strain or force laid upon them, are capable of a threefold interpretation ; a distinct survey of each of which shall be the business of the present exercise.

I. In the first place then, this term *all things* may refer to the whole series of prophecies and predictions recorded of Christ in the scriptures ; which he might be said to *fill*, or rather to *fulfill* by his ascension : which signification, as it is most proper to the force of the Greek word : forasmuch as all other places, which we translate *fulfil*, are expressed by this word *πληρώω*, so it is most agreeable to the method of the scriptures, speaking of Christ ; of whom we never find any great action recorded, which was before pointed at by some prophecy, but it is immediately added, that it was done *ἵνα πληρωθῇ*, that such or such a scripture might be fulfilled. And for Christ's ascension, and the consequent of it, his

diffusion

diffusion of the gifts of the spirit, we have an eminent prediction of that in *Psalms* lxxviii. 18. here referred to by the apostle; *He ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

Concerning which place, it must be confessed, that both the Hebrew and the Septuagint from the Hebrew render it, not, *he gave gifts unto men*, but *he received gifts amongst men*, ἀνέβη εἰς ὑψὺ, καὶ ἔλαβεν δώματα ἐν ἀνθρώποις: And for this the Jews, who at all hands lie upon the catch, charge Paul as a perverter of the prophet's meaning, in a false rendition of the sense of the place.

But to repel their calumny, and to save the credit of our apostle, there may be a double answer applied to this.

I. That the apostle did not precisely tie himself to the very words, but followed only the design and sense of the text: and this was the same in both those different words, ἔλαβεν καὶ ἔδωκε, *he received* and *he gave*. For the prophet speaking of it, as of a thing, at that time, future, says, that Christ *received gifts*, namely, from his Father: which gifts he was afterwards, in the fulness of time, to pour forth upon men. But the apostle speaking of it, as of a thing in his time past and fulfilled, mentions only his giving and actual bestowing those gifts, which indeed was the end for which he first received them of his Father.

2. But

2. But, secondly, if the Hebrew be rendered not he received gifts *for men*, but *from* or *amongst* them, as the Jews contend that it ought. Forasmuch as the prophet, in that Psalm, relates the conquest God gave his people over their enemies; whereupon he is said to have received gifts from them; as it is the custom for conquerors to set apart and consecrate some of their spoils to their god. I say, if this be admitted, as the plea is very plausible, we affirm then, that it was not Paul's design, to use these words, *he gave gifts unto men*, by way of citation out of David; but having by a kind of transumption and accommodation borrowed those former words of his, *he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive*, to shew how great a triumph God made over those greater enemies, sin, and death, in the ascension of Christ, that he might now also express how much this spiritual triumph did exceed those temporal ones that God wrought for his People over their temporal enemies; whereas the Psalmist says, that upon those triumphs he *received gifts from men*. Paul here adds these words of his own, that upon this greater triumph in the ascension of Christ, *he gave gifts unto men*, according to which sense the *words carry in them* an elegant antithesis, designed to set forth the excellency of one above the other, by how much it is more excellent to *give* than to *receive*. And thus we have a full vindication of the apostle.

But

But here for the further illustration of Christ's *filling all things* in this sense, I cannot pass over that useful observation of Grotius about the word *πληρώω*, that it does not signify only a bare giving an event to a prophecy, many of which, though applied to Christ by the apostles, yet indeed were fulfilled before him; as particularly, that place in *Matt. ii. I have called my son out of Egypt*, was fulfilled in the children of Israel, of whom it was first spoke. But because those prophecies had not only a literal and historical, but also a farther and a mystical intention, therefore this word *πληρώω* signifies a completion even to a redundancy, a fulfilling them *over* and *above*; namely such a one, as not only reaches their first and historical event, but also verifies their mystical and more remote sense.

And such a filling or fulfilling of the old prophecies and predictions, was proper and peculiar to Christ to whom they all pointed, and in whom they all ended, as *in their utmost period, their only center*, their great, and last design. And thus much for the first interpretation.

2. But 2dly, the term *all things* may refer to the church; which sense I shall most insist upon, as carrying in it the subject-matter of this day's commemoration.

Now Christ, it seems, would not have the fabrick of his church inferior to that of the universe: It being itself indeed a lesser world *pick'd* or rather *sifted* out of the greater, where mankind

mankind is brought into a narrower compass, but refined to a greater perfection. And, as in the constitution of the world, the old philosophy strongly asserts that nature has with much care filled every little space and corner of it with body, there being nothing that it so much abhors as a vacuity : so Christ (as it were) following the methods of nature in the works of grace, has so advantageously framed the whole system of the church ; first, by an infinite power making in it capacities, and then by an equal goodness filling them.

Chasms and emptinesses are the infelicities of the work, but the disgrace of the workman. Capacity unfilled, is the opportunity of misery, the very nature and definition of want. Every vacuity is (as it were) the hunger of the creation, both an undecency, and a torment.

Christ therefore would have his body the church not meager and contemptible, but replenished and born up with sufficiency, displayed to the world with the beauties of fulness and the most enobling perfections.

Now the church being a society of men combined together in the profession of Christian religion, it has unavoidably a double need or necessity emergent from its very nature and constitution. That is, one of government, the other of instruction ; the first agreeing to it simply as a society, the second, as it is such a society. And it is Christ's great prerogative to fill it in both these respects.

I. And

1. And first in respect of its government, of which excellent and divine thing in general we may say this, that, as at first it could be nothing else but the invention of the infinite, eternal mind; so now it is the vital support, and very sinew that holds together all the parts of society. And being of such universal necessity, there must be a policy in church as well as state. The church indeed is a spiritual body, but government is the very spirit of that.

Hereupon it follows in the next verse, *that Christ gave some apostles, some evangelists, some prophets, some pastors and teachers*; part of which are names importing rule and jurisdiction.

But yet in all this catalogue of ecclesiastical officers, we find no lay-elders, no church-aldermen, no spiritual-furrs; nor yet in the whole current of antiquity, till they dropt from the invention of a late impostor, who being first expelled by the popular rout, became afterwards obnoxious to it, and so had no way to make himself chief in the government, but by allowing them a share.

But Geneva certainly is not the mother-church of the world, nor are Mr. Calvin and Mr. Beza fit correctors of antiquity, or prescribers to posterity; nor ought this new fashion in church-government to be therefore authentick, because derived to us from France.

2dly, The

32 S E R M O N II.

2dly, The church being thus framed into the oeconomy of a governed body, stands equally in need of instruction. For inasmuch as the doctrine it professes, grows not upon the stock of natural principles, so as to be deducible from thence by the strength of reason and discourse, but comes derived from immediate and divine revelation; it requires the helps and assistances of frequent inculcation, to water and keep it alive upon the understanding and the will, where nature gives it no footing from any notions within, but what it receives from the force and arts of external impressiion.

Now for this also, Christ made a full and glorious provision by that miraculous diffusion of the holy ghost, after his ascension, upon those great pastors and representatives of his church, the apostles.

In which notable passage of his conferring the Holy Ghost, we have these two things observable.

I. The time when.

II. The manner how it was given.

As for the time, in which it was conferred, this is remarkable in a double respect.

1. In respect of Christian religion itself, it being about its first solemn promulgation; which though it was a doctrine most true and excellent, yet certainly it was also very strange and unusual. And this we may observe, that there is no strange institution that can ever be
of

of long continuance in the world, but that which first enters and ingratiates itself by something signal and prodigious.

The beginning of every thing has a strange and potent influence upon its duration. And the first appearances usually determine men either in their acceptance or dislike. Nothing stamps itself so deep in the memory as that which is fresh and new, and not made contemptible by a former acquaintance; and the freshness of every thing, is its beginning.

Had not Christ therefore ushered in his religion by miracle and wonder, and arrested mens first apprehensions of it by something grand and supernatural; he had hindered its progress by a disadvantageous setting forth, exposed it naked to infidelity, and so rendered it first disputable, and then despised. It had been like the betraying a sublime and noble composition by a low and creeping prologue, which blasts the reputation of the ensuing discourse, and shuts up the auditors approbation with prejudice and contempt.

Moses therefore, by the appointment of God, bringing in a new religion, did it with signs and wonders, the mountain burning, and the trumpet sounding; so that it was not so much the divine matter of the law, as the strange manner of its delivery, that took such hold of the obstinate Jews; and possibly Moses should never have *convinced*, had he not first *frighted* their belief.

D

And

And this is so necessary upon the very principles of nature ; that even those impostors, who have introduced false religions into the world, have yet endeavoured to do it by the same methods by which the true was established. Thus Numa Pompilius settled a religion amongst the old Romans, by feigning strange and supernatural converse with their supposed goddess Egeria. Apollonius Tianæus, who endeavoured to retrieve Gentilism in opposition to Christianity, attempted it by such strange and seemingly miraculous actions. And Mahomet is reported to have planted his impostures by the same way of recommendation. Though in all these the sober and judicious observer, will easily perceive that their miracles were as false as their religions.

But however, this shews how the mind of man is naturally to be prevailed upon ; and that in the proposal of so great a thing to it as a new religion, the natural openness and meeting fervours of mens first acceptance, are by all means to be secured and possessed ; which is more successfully done, by a sudden breaking in upon their faculties with amazement and wonder, then by courting their reason with argument and persuasion.

2. But 2dly, the time of Christs sending the spirit, is very remarkable in respect of the apostles themselves. It was, when they entered upon the full execution of their apostolick office ; and from followers of Christ, became the great leaders of the world.

During

S E R M O N II. 35

During the time of their discipleship, and Christ's converse with them upon earth, we read of no such wonderful endowments, such variety of tongues, such profound penetration into the mysteries of the gospel. But on the contrary with many instances of very thick ignorance, childishness of speech, and stupidity of conception, as appears from their many weak and insignificant questions proposed to Christ; their gross dulness to apprehend many of his speeches, in themselves very plain and intelligible: So that Christ is almost perpetually upbraiding them upon this account, as in *Luke ix. v. 41. How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?* and *Matt. xy. v. 16. Are ye also yet without understanding?* and *Luke xxiv. v. 25. O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have said;* with many other such increpations; which shews, that while they were yet under Christ's wing, and (as it were) in the *nonage* and *minority* of their apostleship, they were not the most seraphick doctors in the world.

But when Christ brings them forth upon the stage of a publick office to act as his commissioners and ambassadors, to gather, and to govern a church in his name; immediately, like Saul upon his being anointed king, they step forth men of another spirit, great linguists, powerful disputants, able to cope with the Jewish Sanhedrim, to baffle their profoundest rabbies, and to out-reason the very Athenians. With their faculties

strangely enlarged, their apprehensions heightened, and their whole mind furnished with that stock of endowments and rare abilities, that in others are the late and dear-bought acquisitions of large parts, long time, and severe study.

I confess there is something in office and authority, that of itself raises a man's abilities; and the very air and genius of government does (as it were) inspire him with that largeness and reach of mind, that never appeared in the same person yet in the state of privacy and subjection: so that government oftentimes does not only *indicare virum*, but *facere*; insensibly mould and frame the man that has it, to a fitness for it; and at length equals him to his employment; raising him above all the personal defects, and littlenesses of his former condition; sublimating his parts, changing his thoughts, and widening his designs. The reason and philosophy of which I shall not enquire into, the thing itself being clear from experience.

Now that the apostles felt these natural influences from their apostolick employment, we have no reason to deny. Yet certainly these could not work in them such a stupendous change. This could be ascribed to nothing, but to those omnipotent assistances of the spirit descending upon them from heaven, and investing them in their office, by so magnificent and miraculous an installation.

I

And

S E R M O N II. 37

And here I cannot but reflect upon the brutish folly, and absurd impudence of the late fanatick decryers of the necessity of human learning, in order to the ministerial function, drawing an argument from this, that the first and greatest ministers of the church were persons illiterate, and not acquainted with the academy, but utterly ignorant of the arts and sciences, the study of which takes up so much of our time, and draws after it so much of our estimation.

Which argument though they vaunt in as their greatest and most plausible, yet there is none that so directly strikes at the very throat of their cause. For, whereas God found the apostles upon their first access to the ministry thus naked of those endowments; he, by a miracle, supplies what their opportunities permitted them not to learn; and by immediate power creates in them those abilities, which others, by their industry acquire.

Had not the knowledge of tongues, and the force of disputation been necessary to a divine, would God have put himself to a miracle to furnish the apostles with such endowments, in themselves so useless, and in these mens judgment also pernicious? But such persons are below a confutation, and made only to credit what they disapprove.

Now concerning the time of the effusion of the Holy Ghost, upon comparing one Scripture with another, there seems to me a

very considerable doubt very near a contradiction, and therefore worthily deserving our explication.

The giving of the Holy Ghost, is by many clear scriptures affirmed to be after Christ's ascension : nay, his ascension is made not only antecedent, but also causal to it, *John vii. 39. The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* And yet in *John xx.* it is said that Christ, a little before his ascension, conferred the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, *ŷ 22. And he breathed upon them, and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost.* Now these places seem directly contradictory,

To which I answer, that if the giving of the Holy Ghost be in both places to be understood for one and the same thing, they certainly contradict one another. Wherefore, to avoid this, we must allow a double giving of the Holy Ghost. *One*, in which Christ conveys the ministerial power : *The other*, in which he confers ministerial gifts and abilities. Now it was the first of these that happened before Christ's ascension, as is clear from the following words in *ŷ 23. Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted.* Which we know is the great instance of ministerial power and authority. And this, by the way, excellently explains the sense of our church, as it uses the same words in the ordination of priests, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, Whereby*
she

He does not profess to convey to the person ordained ministerial gifts and abilities, but only ministerial power.

But this solemn giving of the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension, was a conferring gifts, graces, and abilities upon the apostles, to fit them for the discharge of their ministerial office and power, which had been conveyed to them by the former giving of the Holy Ghost before Christ's ascension. And thus we have given a fair accommodation to these places of scripture.

And so having considered the first thing observable in Christ's giving the Holy Ghost, *viz. the time when*; I pass now to the

2. Second; Which is the manner how it was conferred. And here the more brevity is required; the thing being so eminently known to us all upon that full description of it in *Acts ii. 2, 3. as, that the Holy Ghost descended and sat upon the apostles in the form of cloven fiery tongues, ushered in with the sound of a rushing mighty wind.* The various significancy of which circumstances would furnish out matter for a year's discourse. And as for the Popish writers and commentators, they are almost endless in this particular, so anatomising the miracle into all its minute particles, and spinning out every circumstance into infinite allusions and metaphors: which indeed is their custom, in treating of most of the grand passages of the gospel, till they

D 4

have

have even made their religion itself but a metaphor, that is, something like a religion, but not a religion.

But the design of this great action being to signify, and to transmit spiritual notices by sensible conveyances, it must not wholly be past over in silence.

Briefly therefore, it exhibits to the world, the great means chosen by God, for the propagation of the kingdom of Christ. The apostles beating upon that general misconceit of the Jews, about the kingdom of the Messiah, in the preceding chap. v. 6, asked Christ, *Whether he would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel*; and questionless, in the strength of that prejudice, they expected here some strange appearance of angels that should conquer the world before them, and bring all nations to the Jewish yolk and subjection.

But suddenly, by a new kind of warlike preparation, they receive no other weapons but tongues, the proper badges of him that is the eternal Word, weapons that draw no blood, break no bones; their only armour and artillery was variety of languages, that fitted them more to travel over, than to conquer the world: and thus was that first cause of the world's confusion, made the great instrument of its salvation.

And as these tongues were a proper representation of the gospel, so the peculiar nature and efficacy of this gospel was emphatically set

set forth by those attending circumstances of the fire and the mighty wind, both of which are notable for these two effects:

1. To cleanse. 2. To consume and destroy. The gospel came like a great and mighty wind to dry and cleanse a dirty and polluted world; like a fire to purge and carry off that dross that had spread and settled itself in the inmost regions of our nature. The design of Christianity was nothing else but to make virtue as universal and as natural to men as vice, as desirable to their thoughts, and as suitable to their affections. Christ's intent was not so much to amuse mens reason with the belief of strange propositions, but to refine their manners, to correct their tempers, to turn vultures into doves, goats into sheep; to make the drunkard once for all vomit up his sin, to bring the wanton only in love with purity, and to see no beauty but in holiness; to make men of covetous, cruel, and intemperate, to become liberal, courteous, and sober; in a word, to be new creatures, and excellent persons.

And therefore, he that in the profession of so pure and noble a religion, thinks not of the design of it; but only *bears*, and never *feels* the word; to whom it comes only in the sound of the *wind*, but not in the force and efficacy of the *fire*. Who in the midst of all spiritual helps, of the several methods of amendment and renovation; as seasonable sermons,

mons, continual prayers, frequent sacraments, and the like; yet carries his old base inclinations fresh and lively about him; and cannot say that he ever conquered so much as one habitual sin, nor got the better of any one vile appetite: but remains sordidly obnoxious, and a slave to all its motions and returns; so that by a desperate vicissitude of sin and duty, he *bears and sins, prays and sins, partakes and sins*; and that perhaps with a better stomach than before; till by such a continual mockery of God, he comes at length to have finished the fatal round of reprobation. Such a one will find, that that word which could not cleanse him, will be a *wind* to blast, and a *fire* to consume him; and that the same spirit that only breathed in gentle, but neglected persuasions, will at length, like a resisted tempest, rage in the sad effects of incurable breaches, and a final confusion.

S E R M O N III.

JOHN ix. latter part v 4.

The night cometh when no man can work.

THESSE words, as they lie in the context, are a general maxim or assertion assigned as a reason of Christs constancy and assiduity in the particular discharge of those works, which, as mediator, he was to perform while he was yet conversant in the world. And for the figurative scheme of the words, there is nothing more usual in the dialect of Scripture, then to set forth and express the time allotted for this life by *day*; and the time and state after life, which is death, by *night*: the reasons of which similitude being very natural and obvious, to be exact and particular in recounting them would be but to tell men what they know already, and consequently a work both precise and superfluous.

The sense of the text seems most naturally to lay itself forth in these three propositions.

I. That

44 S E R M O N III.

I. That there is a work allotted, begun, cut out, and appointed to every man to be performed by him, while he lives in the world.

II. That the time of this life being once expired, there is no further opportunity or possibility of performing that work.

III. That the consideration of this ought to be the highest and the most pressing argument to every man, to use his utmost diligence in discharging the work incumbent upon him in this life.

I. For the first of these, *That there is a work cut out*, &c. we must observe yet every man may be considered under a double capacity or relation :

1. As he is a part or member of the body politick, and so is not his own, but stands included in and possessed by the community. In which capacity he is obliged to contribute his proportion of help to the publick ; as sharing from thence with others, the benefits of society, and so being accountable to make it some retribution, in his particular station and condition,

2. A man may be considered, as he is a member and subject of a spiritual and higher kingdom. And in this capacity, he is to pursue the *personal*, yet *great* interest of his own salvation. He is sent into this world, to make sure of a better ; to glorify his maker
by

by studying to save himself; and, in a word, to aim at enjoyments divine, and supernatural, and higher then this animal life can aspire unto.

Now these two capacities are very different; by the former, a man is to approve himself a good citizen; by the latter a good Christian: And though these relations have their precise limits and distinctions; yet we are not to be ignorant of the subordination of one to the other, as its superior. So that if they chance to clash and thwart, the inferior must give way; nor must a man do any thing to preserve a civil interest, that is contrary to a spiritual, and the greater the obligations lying upon him with reference to the good of his soul, and the invaluable concerns of felicity in the other world. The distinction of a politick and a private conscience, is a thing that true reason explodes, and religion abhors, as placing the matter of duty under a contradiction, and, consequently, can be nothing but an art to give a man satisfaction in the midst of his sin.

We have seen then how every man sustains a double capacity; according to which he has also a double work or calling:

1. A temporal one, by which he is to fill up some place in the common wealth by the exercise of some useful profession, whether as a divine, lawyer, or physician; a merchant, soldier, mariner, or any inferior handicraft;

handicraft; by all which, as by so many greater and less wheels, the business of the vast body of the publick is carried on, its necessities served and its state upheld.

And God, who has ordained both society and order, accounts himself so much served, by each man's diligent pursuit, though of the meanest trade, that his stepping out of the bounds of it to some other work (as he presumes) more excellent, is but a bold and thankless presumption, by which the man puts himself out of the common way and guard of providence. For God requires no man to be praying or reading when the exigence of his profession, calls him to his hammer or his needle; nor commands any one from his shop to go hear a sermon in the church, much less to preach one in the pulpit.

God, as the Lord and great master of the family of the universe, is still calling upon all his servants to work and labour; a thing so much disdained by the gallant and the epicure, is yet that general standing price, that God and nature has set upon every enjoyment on this side heaven; and he that invades the possession of any thing but upon this claim, is an intruder and an usurper. I have given order, says the apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 10. *That if any one refuse to labour, neither should he eat.* It is the active arm, and the busy hand, that must both purvey for the mouth, and withal give

give it a right to every morsel that is put into it.

Some perhaps think they are not born to labour, because they are born to estates. But the sentence that God passed upon Adam is universal, we find in it no exception or proviso for any noble or illustrious drone: No greatness can privilege a man to lye basking in sloth and idleness; and to eat the labours of the husbandman's hand, and drink the sweat of his brow; to wallow and sleep in ease only as an useless lump of well cloathed, well descended earth; earth for heaviness only, but not for fruitfulness, serves no other end of society, but only to make one in a number.

But it may be replied, shall those whom God has blessed in the world, and (as it were) by a particular mark of his providential favour exempted from the general curse of toil and labour, be obliged to work in a trade, or to be of such or such a laborious profession. No, I answer, that they need not, nor is this the thing contended for, but *simply* that they should *labour* and fill up all the hours of their time, by employing themselves usefully for the publick; and there are superior and more nobler employments in which this labour may be sufficiently exerted. For is any one so rich or high as to be above the labour of doing good to a whole neighbourhood, of composing differences, studying the customs of his country, reading histories, and learning such arts as may render him both eminent and useful,

ful, serviceable to the publick both in peace and war?

If it be answered, that he stands in need of none of all these, as being already abundantly supplied with all the plenties and supports of life. To this also I rejoin, that they are not only a man's own personal needs, but the general needs of society that command a supply and relief from his labour; add to this also, in the second place, that the obligation to labour, lying upon men, is not founded upon their needs and necessities, but upon God's command, as its proper reason; which command he has laid universally and impartially upon all; and he that excuses himself from all labour, the common lot of mankind, by loading it with the odious name of servility, should do well to consider whether the custom of a place, the vogue of his dependants, and his own little arts of evasion, will be able to bear him out in so broad a contempt of an express command; and to rescue him from that thundering sentence levelled so directly at him, in *Matt. xxv. 30. Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

2. Correspondent to a Christian's other, that is, his spiritual capacity, he has also a spiritual calling or profession; and the work that this engages him to, is that grand one of *working out his salvation*; a work that a life is too little for,
had

had a man any thing more then a life to bestow upon it.

A work that *runs out into* eternity, and upon which depends the woe or welfare of an immortal soul.

Now this work is threefold.

1. To make our peace with God.
2. To get our sins mortified.
3. To get our hearts purified with the contrary graces.

1. And first, for the first of these, the making our peace with God. We know how tedious a work it is to reconcile or appease a potent enemy amongst men ; frequent addresses must be made, great and irksome submissions must be digested. Days must be spent in attending, and nights in projecting how to assuage, and qualify, and remove the swelling disgust; and recover a place in that breast, that has been boiling with rancor and enmity, and designs of mischiefs. Many years perhaps go over a man's head, before he gets any ground upon such an one, if, peradventure, he succeeds at last; so hard, so troublesome, and discouraging a task it is, to win back a lost affection. Now every man must know that upon his very first coming into the world, he has this huge task upon him to appease and pacify a great enemy ; an enemy so much the harder to be pacified, because once a friend. This enemy is God, and there-

E

fore

fore his enmities must be commensurate to his person, that is, infinite and unlimited. And it has this property also, that it is an enmity not commencing upon a mere grudge, but upon an injurious violation of his justice, and consequently not to be laid down, without satisfaction. This satisfaction was to be infinite and so impossible to be exhibited by a finite nature. The case being thus, Christ the eternal son of that offended God, was pleased to offer himself as a surety and a ransom in our behalf; so as to answer and satisfy all the demands of offended justice.

A satisfaction therefore there is made for us, but so made, that there are conditions required on our parts, before there can be any application of it to our persons, and if these conditions are not reached, we may die with pardons in our Bibles, but not at all belonging to us. Now these conditions are, faith and repentance; words quickly uttered, but things not so easily effected. There must pass such a change upon our natures; such a renovation of the *very spirit of our minds*, as may amount to the verification of this of us, that we are *new creatures*. The new creature is the subject of justification. And being once *justified*, the apostle tells us, *Rom. v. 1. we have peace with God.*

But how is it possible to establish a peace between natures of the widest distance, and the fiercest opposition? such as is the most holy, pure,

S E R M O N I I I . 51

pure, and just nature of God and the nature of man polluted and envenom'd by original corruption. Can fire and stubble strike a league together and be friends? can guilt and justice unite and embrace? no, nothing of any reconciliation was to be expected; till such time as repentance should cleanse this Augean stable; and the spirit of God infuse into the soul a new principle called faith; which principle shall really translate a man into another family, advance him to the privilege of adoption, and so make him a son and an heir to the God of heaven, by the merits of the second Adam, who was an out-law and a traitor by the first.

2. The second work that we are to do, is to get our sins mortified. For after we are transplanted from the state of nature into a state of grace; we are not presently to think that our work is wholly done. For after the Israelites were possessed of Canaan, they had many of the Amorites, and other enemies to conquer and drive out before them. Every man has corrupt sinful habits that have overspread, and, as it were, engarisoned themselves in the most inward parts of his soul; habits deeply fixt and not easily dispossessed. These are the adversaries that he is to encounter and to wage war with; adversaries that have all the advantages against him imaginable; such as he must make his way to through his own

E 2
heart,

52 S E R M O N III.

heart, and open his bosom, that the weapon may reach them.

The sharpest, the most afflicting, and yet the most concerning part of a Christian's duty, is the mortification of his sin. For it is as it were a man's weeding of his heart, he shall find it a growing evil ; an evil that by a cursed fertility will sprout out after the cutting. For scarce any weed is fetcht up at once ; the gardeners hand and hook must be continually watching over it ; and he accounts his ground preserved, if it is not over-run.

Let a man make experiment in any one vice ; only let it be such an one as is agreeable and incident to the several ages of man ; as for instance, be it pride : For the extirpation of which, we will suppose a man by the influences of a preventing grace very early in his attempts against it, and laying the axe to the root of this tarring vice in his very youth. Yet, does it fall before him suddainly and easily ? does the first foil or blow make him victorious, and enable him to set his foot upon the neck of his conquered enemy ? No, there are many vicissitudes in the combat ; sometimes he seems to get that under, sometimes that seems to be above him. And what through the strength of its hold, and the treachery of its working, a man finds enough to exercise and humble his old age ; and perhaps after all his conflicts with it, goes out of the world, only with this half-trophy (enough indeed

indeed to save him) that he was not overcome.

Now, what I say of this, is equally true of all other vices; and he that has a voluptuous, an intemperate, or a covetous heart to deal with, will find work enough laid out for him for this life. And let him beware that he ply his spiritual warfare so, that after forty, fifty, or threescore years, his vice is not as lively in his aged bones, and under his hoary hairs as ever it was; and he die a decrepit aged sinner, but yet in the youth and vigour of his sin.

3. The third work incumbent upon every man from his Christian calling, is to get his heart purified and replenished, with the proper graces, and virtues of a Christian. Christianity ends not in negatives. No man clears his garden of weeds, but in order to the planting of flowers, or useful herbs in their room. God calls upon us to dispossess our corruptions, but it is for the reception of new inhabitants. A room may be clean, and yet empty; but it is not enough that our hearts be *swEEP* unless they be also *garnish*; and that we lay aside our pride, our luxury, our covetousness, unless humility, temperance, and liberality rise up and shine in their places. The design of religion would be very poor and short, should it look no further th n only to keep men from being swine, and goats, and tygers, without improving the principles of humanity, into

positive and higher perfections. The soul may be cleansed from all blots, and yet still be left but a blank.

But Christianity that is of a thriving, aspiring nature, requires us to proceed from grace to grace; to *virtue* adding *patience*, to *patience* *temperance*, to *temperance* *meekness*, to *meekness* *brotherly kindness*, and the like; thus ascending by degrees, till at length the top of the ladder reaches heaven, and conveys the soul so qualified into the mansions of glory.

I shew'd before the difficulty of mortification, and we are not to think that it is at all less difficult, to make a depraved heart virtuous, to force the soil of an ill temper and (as it were) to graft virtuous habits upon the stock of a vicious nature. We see, those, that learn a trade, and the habit of any mechanic art, must yet bestow time and toil in the acquiring of it; though perhaps they have also a natural propensity to the art they are in pursuit of. Which being so, with how much more difficulty, may we imagine a man to get humility or heavenly-mindedness, while all the appetites, and the very nerves of his soul, strive against it, and endeavour to pull down as fast as he can build up.

True it is therefore, that there is not one virtue, that is produced in the soul of fallen man, but is infused into it by the operation of God's spirit. And if any one should hereupon except, first, to what purpose then is our en-

deavour in this matter, if the spirit of God works all? and secondly, whence is it that these virtues are not in an instant conveyed into the heart in their full perfection, but appear and shew themselves only gradually, and by certain steps and encreases?

To both these doubts, this one answer will give full satisfaction, namely, that habits, though they are infused, do yet come after the manner of such as are *acquired*. Though our *working* produces not those habits, yet the spirit infuses them into us while we are working; and that in those gradual proportions, that in the whole action it still maintains an imitation of the course of nature, that passes from *less* profit to *more* till at length it arrives at the utmost perfection that it first intended.

And thus I have finished the first proposition, and shewn that there is a work appointed to every man to be performed by him while he lives in the world; as also the several parts of that work, I come now,

II. To the second proposition, namely, That the time of this life being once expired, there remains no further opportunity or possibility of performing this work.

There is no repenting when we are once nailed up in our coffins; no believing in the grave; no doing the works of charity and temperance in the dust, or growing new-creatures amongst the worms; life is the adequate

space allotted by the wisdom of heaven for these matters, which being ended, there is no after-game or retrieving of a bad choice. And so much seems couched under that one word by which the time of this life is expressed, namely, *a day*, which as it is applied to life may emphatically denote three things.

1. The shortness of it. What is a day, but a few minutes sunshine? one of the most inconsiderable proportions of time; such an one, as we never grudge to bestow upon any thing; an indiscernible shred of that life that is itself *but a span*. Yet in these reckonings, God is pleased to rate it by a narrower and a more contemptible measure. God will not dally with us in the great affairs of eternity. He allows us our day, and but our day to choose whether or no, we will be happy for ever. Which shows what a value God puts upon these opportunities, by dispensing them so sparingly, that though we have enough to use, yet we have none to lavish or to lend. We are hurried through the world; our whole life is but (as it were) a day's journey; and therefore certainly it concerns us to manage it so, that we may have comfort at our journey's end.

2. A day, as it denotes the shortness, so it implies also the sufficiency of our time. A day, as short as it is, yet it equals the business of the day. God that knows the exact
propor-

proportions of things, took the measure of both; and found that the compass of our lives would fully grasp and take in all our occasions. *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* says our Saviour: implying that that was time enough for any man to discharge all the work, that God, and nature, and his profession could for that space impose upon him.

And if any one here object, the shortness of the time allotted for a Christian's work against the sufficiency of it; though it must be confessed, that, should we live never so long, we could not have too much time to do the works of repentance, and to honour God in; yet, according to the oeconomy and measures of the gospel, in which God accepts our services according to their *truth* not their *bulk*, we have space enough assigned us even in this short life to do all that is necessary to bring us to a better.

And he that repents not and turns to God in the space of fifty or threescore, or perhaps seventy years, would, for any thing that is in him, live and persevere in the same impenitence should God add five hundred years to his life. And it is not to be doubted, but God prolongs the life of many here on earth, not with any expectation of their repentance and conversion, as knowing them to be incorrigible, but to serve other ends of his providence in carrying on the affairs of the world,

3dly,

3dly, and lastly, by a day is denoted to us the determinate stint and limitation of our time. For none must think that the great and wise governor of the world has left a matter of so high a concernment and of so direct an influence upon the business of the world, as the life of man is loose and unfixt. God has concluded all under a certain and unchangeable decree; and we have our bounds, beyond which we shall not pass. For as after such a number of hours, it will unavoidably be night, and there is no stopping of the setting sun; so, after we have passed such a measure of time, our season has its period; we are benighted, and we must bid adieu to all our opportunities.

It is not in the power of man to carve out a longer life to himself. The disposal of times and seasons is part of the divine prerogative: and we know not whether God will allow the fig-tree to grow one or two or three years in his vineyard, but sure it is that when its appointed time is come, it must cumber the ground no longer. God has allotted to men talents of time as well as of other things, to some ten, to some five, to some one. But still we see each man's proportion is set. And he that has but five, must not think to traffick at the rate of him that has ten.

And thus we have taken some survey of the second proposition, namely, That the time of this life being once expired, there remains no further opportunity or possibility
of

of performing the great work incumbent upon us.

I descend now to the third and last,

III. Which is, that the consideration of this ought to be the highest and the most pressing argument to every man to use his utmost diligence in the discharge of this work.

The enforcing reason of diligence in the undertaking of any work, is the difficulty of the performance of that work. Which difficulty here in our case will appear by comparing of the work *to be done*, with the time allowed for *the doing of it*. The time I shew'd was both short and limited, so on the other side the work to be done is both difficult and necessary.

I. And first for its difficulty, though this has been sufficiently intimated in what was discoursed of before; yet for the further declaration of it, it is observable that there is no action of mankind that carries any thing of hardship with it, but the Scripture expresses the work and duty of a Christian by it. It calls it a *warfare*, and is there any thing so hard and uneasy as what befalls men in the wars? It calls it a *wrestling with principalities and powers*; and is there any thing that employs and distends every joint and fibre of the body, so much as wrestling does? it calls it a *resisting of the devil*, and, what is more, a *resisting unto blood*: and do men shed their blood and expose their lives to the point of

of the rapier, and the fury of the enemy with so much pastime.

But no expressions are so emphatical as those of our Saviour, who calls this work *a taking up of ones cross*; a severe task indeed, whether a man bear the cross or the cross him. It seems to be our Saviour's design all along, to possess men with a true and impartial representation of those afflicting parts of duty, that will be indispensably required of such as shall give up their names to Christianity.

But above all, there is a place in *Luke xiii. 24.* which I wonder any considerate person can read without trembling: *strive* (says our Saviour) *to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.* What? seek to enter, and yet find no entrance? good God! what then will become of those numberless numbers of men, who never so much as sought, who never were at the expence of an hearty endeavour to get themselves into these narrow paths of felicity. If those that come *crying, Lord, Lord, and striving*, shall yet have the door shut upon them, what shall the lewd, the slothful, and the sottish epicure build the hopes of his salvation upon?

And now when we have seen the work to be done so highly difficult, and the time to do it in so very short, can there be a more cogent argument, to induce a man to be covetous of every moment, and to make his industry
pieces

S E R M O N III. 61

piece out the scantiness of his opportunities? He that has far to go, and much to do, surely is concerned to rise very early; to count not only hours but minutes, to make his work keep pace with his time; and (in a word) to mate the difficulty of the business with the diligence of the prosecution.

2. Next to the difficulty of the work, let us take an argument from its necessity. So far as it is necessary for a man to be saved, so far this work is necessary. Which argument will be heightened by comparing this necessity with the stinted fixed limitation of the time allotted for the work. There is no deferring it beyond our day: there is no such thing as *a to-morrow* in the Christian's calendar. And yet, are there any almost that lay this so important a consideration to heart? Men, especially in the flower and freshness of their youth, are infinitely careless: while they think they spend upon a full stock, and have the supplies of nature, the treasures of strength, and opportunity open before them. They know not the value of those precious never returning hours, that they quaff, and revel, and trifle away, when, as the revocation of the least minute is not to be purchased with all the Persian treasures, or the mines of both the Indies.

But when a man comes at last to reflect upon his past days, and the little sand that is left him to run; when *his feet are stumbling upon*

upon the dark mountains, and the shadows of his long night have overtaken him, he never asks the question then, how to pass away time, and to spend the day. None of his hours then lye upon his hands.

Now when amidst all this, his great accounts shall also press hard upon him, and the terror of past sins lye heavy upon his conscience ; it is worth considering his behaviour in this condition. None surely ever heard such a one calling religion pedantry, deriding a divine, or jesting upon the Scriptures. How much soever a wretch and a scoffer he was before, his note is changed now ; and we may hear him with the most earnest, humble, and lamentable outcries, plying his offended God :

Lord spare me for a while : Lord respite me but for a month, a week, or but a day, to make my peace with thee. Set the long and the dark night back for a few hours, that I may put my accounts in some better order for my appearance before thy dreadful tribunal.

And then for this spiritual guide, whom perhaps, not long since, he could scoff out of his company with disdain ; he can now bespeak in a more abject and entreating dialect. Sir, do you think that there is any mercy, any hope for such a one as I ? Have I not out-sinned the line of grace ? Do you not perceive any mortal symptoms upon my sins ?
Do

Do you think that my repentance is sincere, that it reaches the conditions of the covenant, and that I may venture my salvation upon the reality of it? Can you give me any solid argument from Scripture, or the judgment of divines, that the promises of mercy can extend to a man that has committed such and such sins, and that under such and such circumstances? And that I do not all this while abuse and flatter myself, and only prepare for an eternal disappointment? Never did any client, with so much scruple and solicitousness, enquire of his *counsel* about the strength or weakness of his title, when he was to go to law for all his estate, and to see his whole fortune canvassed at the bar: as a man in this condition will dispute his title to heaven, and argue his several doubts and mis-givings with his spiritual guide or confessor.

No sinner, be he never so hardy and resolved, must think to keep up the same stoutness of heart, when he is just a stepping into the other world. No; these are usually the sad accents and language of the dying sinner, when he perceives his time spent, and in the prospect of his approaching end, lyes farther bemoaning himself.

Oh, that I were to live over my former days again! that I could command back some of those portions of time that I sacrificed to my vice, to the humour of my companions, and to those vanities that now serve only to remind

64 S E R M O N III.

remind me of my folly, and to upbraid me to my face! Oh, that I had employed myself in those severities, that I then laugh'd at, as the needless affected practises of brain-sick-melancholy persons! my work had not been now to do; when my time of working is expired.

I shall close up all with that excellent counsel of the preacher, *Ecclesiastes ix. 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, (and I may add also, nor working out a man's salvation) in the grave whither thou goest.* And going thither we all are apace: wherefore, since after a few days comes death, and after death judgment, and after judgment an eternal, unchangeable condition; surely it concerns us all so to acquit ourselves in the several parts of our Christian profession, that we may be able to leave the world with that saying of the blessed apostle, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.*

Which God of his mercy at last bestow upon us all, to whom be rendered and ascribed as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

S E R-

S E R M O N IV.

Preached at the consecration of Dr.
SETH WARD, bishop of Oxon.

J E R E M I A H XV. 20.

I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, to save thee and deliver thee, saith the Lord.

I Shall not pretend to derive episcopacy from the Old Testament, as some do presbytery from Jethro in his humble petition and advice to Moses, concerning the government of the Jews. Which presbytery, though some call the rod of Aaron, yet it more resembles those rods of Jacob, as being designed to midwife a pybald, mixt, ringstraked progeny of church governors into the world. However, it is well that we see from whence it first came, even from Midian, an heathenish place, and unacquainted with the true wor-
 * F ship

ship of God, then confined only to the Jews.

But it is pity that the Old Testament does not describe the office of those elders, as well as mention the name; we reading scarce any thing of them there, but that some of them scuffled with Moses and Aaron in the classis of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram. As also of their idolatry, *Ezekiel vi.* And of their private examination of Susanna in the story of Daniel; which book, though it be apocryphal, yet the practice remains authentic and canonical.

I say, I shall not derive episcopacy from the Jewish model: though, if I would take their liberty to use allusions for arguments, I might argue a superintendency of bishops over presbyters, from the superiority of the priests over the Levites, much better than they can found their discipline upon the word *elder*, catching at the bare letter, and, according to their custom, stripping the word from the sense: And also with much more probability, than their Coryphæus in queen Elizabeth's time argued their discipline from Psalm cxxii. 5. That in Jerusalem *there are set thrones of judgment.* By which it seems they would be kings as well as priests, and reign as well as rule, dashing the princes of the earth like a potter's vessel (an expression which they much delight in) till, at length, they crouched to the holy discipline, kissed the rod of Aaron, and

and so acknowledged their *elders* for their *betters*.

But surely this I may argue solidly. That if God instituted such a standing superiority and jurisdiction of the priests over the Levites, then these two things follow :

1. That such a superiority is not in itself absolutely irregular and unlawful.

2. That neither does it carry in it an antipathy and contrariety to the power of godliness.

And yet upon these two suppositions, as upon two standing truths, all their calumnies are commenced ; as if there were something in the very vital constitution of such a subordination, that was irreconcilable to the power of godliness. As in respect of the civil power, Calvin, in his commentary upon *Daniel*, chap. v. *ŷ* 21. that it is common to all kings to jostle out God from his government ; a good plea for his abetting the ejection of the lawful prince of Geneva, from his government and prerogative.

But to come yet closer to the matter ; I do not say, that Jeremy was a bishop, nor with an exact parallel argue from one to the other. But we know, that in things of a most different nature, we may yet so sever their peculiar determining differences as to leave some one general reason in which they may unite

and agree ; so here, setting aside the peculiar differences of the Jewish and the Christian oeconomy, there is a general nature of government, in which both correspond. And therefore, what concerned Jeremy as a church-governor, may with good logic be applied to a bishop.

Though indeed the correspondence here may extend to more peculiar and personal resemblances ; for might not our bishops lately take up, and appropriate to themselves that complaint of Jeremy, in chap. xv. *ŷ 10. I have wronged no man, I have neither lent on usury, nor have men lent to me on usury, and yet every man curses me?* were they not also, like Jeremy, persecuted from prison to prison, and, like him, traduced as secret friends and parties with Babylon, and put into the dungeon for their impartial speaking their consciences? And lastly, notwithstanding their piety, hospitality, and moderation, have they not with Jeremy seen a sad and uncomfortable issue of all their ministerial labours, and been forced to second their prophecies with lamentations?

But now to enter upon the words; we have in them these three things considerable :

- I. God's qualification of Jeremy to be an overseer in his church ; *I will make thee a fenced brazen wall.*

II. The

S E R M O N IV. 69

II. The entertainment that he should meet with in the administration of his office, *They shall fight against thee.*

III. The issue and success of this opposition, that through God's eminent and peculiar assistance, *They should not prevail against him.*

I. And first, for the first of these, God's qualification of Jeremy to his charge, *I will make thee a brazen fenced wall.* Now a wall imports these two things :

1. Enclosure.
2. Fortification.

1. It implies enclosures. God did not think fit to leave his church without enclosure, open like a common, for every beast to feed upon and devour it. Commons are always bare, pill'd and shorn, as the sheep that feed upon them. And our experience has shewn us, as soon as the enclosures of our church were pluck'd up, what a herd of cattle of all sorts invaded it. It contained, as commons usually do, both *multitude* and *mixture*.

God said to Moses, *pull off thy shoes, for the place upon which thou standest is holy ground*; which command would have been but of little force amongst us, where the ground has been therefore counted *common* because *holy*; church lands have been every one's claim, free and common to all but to churchmen; even, as

common as as the churchyard itself; one to be possessed by the living, the other by the dead.

And the offices of the church were as prostitute as her revenues; every one would be a labourer in that field, from whence they expected so fair an harvest. Here a brewer, here a cobbler, there a butcher; a fair translation from the *killing* of one flock to the *feeding* of another.

We have Christ comparing the kingdom of heaven, that is, the church, to traffick, to merchandize: But we might compare ours to a fair, in which there was a general confluence and appearance of all tradesmen; and he that had broke in any, presently set up in divinity.

Wherefore to stave off the profane intrusions of the rabble for the future, we must have an enclosure, and an hedge will not serve turn. So many rotten stakes of lay-governors, will not raise a fence; an hedge that surrounds an orchard, may harbour those thieves that intend to rob it.

No, one brazen wall, one diocesan bishop, will better defend this enclosed garden of the church, than a juncto of five hundred shrubs, than all the quicksets of Geneva, all the thorns and brambles of presbytery.

2. A wall imports fortification. No city can be secure without it. It is, as it were, a standing inanimate army; a continual defence, without the help of defenders.

There

S E R M O N IV. 71

There is no robbery, but the wall is first broke; no invasion, but it enters through the ruins of this. And therefore David puts up this for Sion in Psalm cxxii. 7. *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy bulwarks.* Indeed, it had therefore *peace and prosperity*, because it had *walls and bulwarks*.

Something must encircle the church, that will both discriminate and protect it. And the altar must be railed in, not only for distinction, but defence.

And such a thing is a church-governor, a well qualified bishop. It is he that must secure the church, and not the little inferior pastors about him. There is as much difference between his protection and theirs, as there is between being encompassed by one continued wall, and by a rank of little hills.

It was Moses, and not the elders of Israel that stood in the gap; and for our own parts, if *we* would determine upon whom to place our government, certainly of all others those persons are most unfit to stand in the gap that first made it.

We have seen now what is imported in this metaphor of a wall, as applied to a church-governor. Which title that he may make good and verify, there are required in him these three qualifications:

1. *Courage*, which leads the way to all the rest; a wall, nay, a brazen wall will not sometimes prove a defence if it is not well

mann'd. Every churchman should have the spirit of a soldier. And pray let us make an exchange, the soldiers have sufficiently invaded the ministers officers; let ministers now borrow a little of the soldiers courage.

Peter was a resolute and a bold man, and therefore fit to feed Christ's lambs. But he that is timorous and flexible, apt to decline opposition when he can, and when he cannot to yield to it, will be jaded and rid like an ass; and like a pitcher, he will be took and emptied by his own handle, to the *ruin of the church* and the reproach of his function. He will be used, instead of being obeyed; and men will make him their instrument instead of their governor.

He that does not find in himself a courage to withstand the boldness and violence of a proud seducer, or a popular schismatic, betrays his charge in the very undertaking it. A servile temper in any one is unworthy; but a spirit of servitude in the place of government is unnatural; And he that fears, does something more than serve: He wears his white in his timorous face, and therefore deserves not to wear it in his sleeves.

The greatest attempts in the world that have failed, have miscarried by the treachery of this one quality, irresolution. Fear is a base thing, it enslaves a man's reason to his fancy; and for the most part proceeds from, but always looks like guilt.

And

And it agrees to no man living, so ill as to a prelate of the church; of whose qualities if we take a survey, we shall find that though learning be his ornament, piety a necessary property, yet resolution is his very essence; and now especially is the want of it inexcusable, when the ground is firm under you, and the heavens, as yet, fair above you; and all the prudent and judicious for you that are about you.

Shall those be able to nose and outbrave you, who take all their courage from *guilt* and from *despair*? they deride and tax you for *bowing and cringing*, pray therefore *whatsoever you do, do not bow and cringe to them.*

2. There is required innocence and integrity. A brazen wall, admits of no cracks and flaws; but that which is made of the baser materials of mud and mortar, of a corrupt conscience, and a corrupter conversation, it gapes into chinks and holes, and quickly totters, being weak and obnoxious.

*Hic murus abeneus esto
Nil conscire sibi*

Let our governors expect reproaches and calumnies, but being thrown at brass they will never stick, upon mud they will, clay cannot mingle with brass or iron. And if men throw dirt, it will not fasten till it meets with dirt.

A bi-

74 S E R M O N IV.

A bishop's integrity is the best way to silence a factious minister. Let men first wash their hands in innocency, and then let them compass the altar.

In these stars of God's right hand, it is their power indeed that gives them an influence, but it is their innocence that makes them shine. Unblameableness of life, an untainted pureness of manners, it defends the person and confirms the office; as cleanliness, it both refreshes, and, at the same time, also strengthens the body. Rust, it not only defaces the aspect, but also corrodes the substance; and a rusty sword, does execution upon nothing but its own scabbard.

Nothing that is vicious can be lasting; vice is rotten, and it makes so. Whatsoever is wicked is also weak, *Ezek. xvi. 30. Since thou doest these things, how weak is thy heart?*

The enemies of the church may fear your power, but they dread your innocence. It is this, that stops the open sepulchre, and beats back the accusation upon the teeth of the accuser. The innocent white, it is a triumphant colour.

And believe it, when all these calumniators shall have spit their venom; it will be found that an unspotted life will be to them both a confutation, and revenge.

For sin they love, that is, to enjoy it in themselves, and to accuse it in others; but God forbid that we should so far gratify their malice

S E R M O N IV. 75

malice as to verify their invectives, or that any crime should sit blushing upon the mitre.

And certainly it were a strange and a shameful thing, to behold vice installed, debauchery enthroned; and to have the whole transaction only the solemnity of an advanced sin, and a consecrated impiety.

3. The third and last qualification that I shall mention, is authority; it is to be a *fenced*, as well as a *brazen wall*. The inward firmness of one must be corroborated by the exterior munitions of the other.

Courage is like a giant with his hands tied, if it has not authority and jurisdiction to draw forth and actuate its resolution. Courage is nothing, if it is not back'd with a commission.

There are those, who absolutely deny any jurisdiction to belong to the church; affirming, that all the apostolical sanctions were rather *advice* than *law*; thus making the church officers to be only like a college of physicians, who, when they consult about, and determine any matter in physic, and prescribe to their patients, their *prescriptions* command nothing by way of authority, but only propose by way of counsel. Whence it is the less wonder, that Erastus a physician should endeavour to reduce the church to such an imaginary power.

Others, amongst which a person of great learning and discontent, though they proceed not

not to a plain barefaced denial of the church's jurisdiction, yet they deny the derivation of it from Christ; and derive it from the consent of the primitive Christians, voluntarily choosing governors and a government, and then submitting themselves to their jurisdiction.

But God forbid that the church should be forced either to follow Erastus's prescriptions, or to try her title and plead her cause at an adversary's bar.

Certain it is, that the New Testament makes mention of several acts of ecclesiastical jurisdiction performed by the apostles and others. And we find also several express speeches of Christ that do evidently endue them with such a jurisdiction. But we read not a word, that it came from any such consent, or voluntary submission of a company of Christians combining together, and choosing their own model; and it is strange that in such a matter the antiquary should so much recede from the judgment of antiquity.

But thanks be to God, that our church has not only its jurisdiction from Christ, but also a superadded overplus of confirmation from the secular power, which has piously and prudently provided those laws, that will certainly bind up her breaches and bring order out of confusion, if they be executed with the same courage with which they were enacted.

But if the governors and trustees of the church's power, fly back, and shrink, and bury

bury a noble law as soon as ever it is born, may not those that made it object to us, *that they would have healed us, but we would not be healed.* May they not also use that speech of our Saviour to us, *Behold now your house is left to you desolate.* You have lost your advantages and overlook'd your opportunities.

Does it become a man with a sword by his side to beseech? or a governor armed with authority to entreat? He that thinks to win obstinate schismatics by condescension, and to conjure away those evil spirits with the softer lays and music of persuasion, may, as David in the like case, have a javelin flung at his head for his pains, and perhaps escape it as narrowly.

There is a strange commanding majesty in two things, *truth* and *law*, and they are now both on the church's side: But there is a dastardly poorness in guilt and faction that will shrink before the face of justice, and the aspect of authority.

And let faction look, and speak big in a tumult, and in the troubled waters of rebellion; yet I dare vouch this as a truth of certain event, and that without the spirit of prophecy, that courage assisted with law, and law executed with courage will assuredly prevail.

Come we now to the second thing, namely,

- II. The opposition that the church-governor thus qualified, will be sure to meet with, in the administration of his office, expressed

pressed in those words, *They shall fight against thee* ; and this they are like to do these three ways.

1. By seditious preaching and praying.
2. By railing, and libels.
3. And thirdly, perhaps, by open force.

1. And first of all, they will assault their governors with seditious preaching and praying. To preach Christ out of contention is condemned by the apostle ; but to preach contention instead of Christ, certainly is most abominable. We have seen men preached into schism, lectured into sacrilege, and prayed into rebellion ; the very pulpit has been made to undermine the church.

We have been robb'd and plunder'd in scripture phrase, and have heard rapines and bloodshed not only *justified*, but *glorified*.

People in the mean time thronging to the church, not like doves to their windows, but like eagles to their prey ; to have their appetites enraged, to have their talons whet against government, and their consciences fired against whatsoever is constituted in church and state.

Read the collections of sermons upon their bloody *thanksgivings*, and their blood thirsty humiliations, and upon other occasions before the two houses, which are so many satyrs against government, so many declamations against the church ; every line and period almost
spitting

spitting poison against monarchy, against discipline and decency; to the reproach of that *exercise*, to the shame of their calling, and (so far as it lay at the mercy of their practices) to the blot of Christianity.

I say, let any one read that collection, or to speak more properly that *magazine* of sermons; and then let him confess that it was the sword of the tongue that first drew and unsheathed the other.

He that would hear an invective against the ministry, let him not go to a tavern, to a camp, or to an exchange, but let him repair rather to a church. And when his occasions shall carry him to the market-town, to furnish himself with other commodities, if he would be furnished also with a stock of arguments against loyalty and the church, let him leave the market-place a while and step aside into the lecture.

2. Their second way of fighting against the officers of the church will be by railing and libels. I may seem to commit an absurdity, I confess, in making this a different head from their *preaching* and *praying*. But considering that they speak from the press as well as from the pulpit, and in other places besides the church, we must admit of this distinction.

And for this way of opposition by virulent unseemly language, odious terms, and vilifying words, none ever improved their talent to such an height of perfection.

The

The reverend fathers of the church were the chief mark, at which their virulence was levelled: And for these, the more moderate of their opposers were contended to call them by no worse names than *whited walls, hypocrites, painted sepulchres, scribes and Pharisees, implacable enemies of godliness, limbs of antichrist, retainers to the whore of Babylon*. But others who had a greater measure of this gift, bestowed upon them higher titles, as *devils incarnate, murderers of souls, dumb dogs*; and some, that would tip their virulence with more than ordinary wit, have thought fit to call them *dumb dogs, that could only bark at God's people*.

I could give you a larger catalogue of these gentle, pious, Christian expressions used by the brotherhood in queen Elizabeth's days; though since much augmented with several additions and enlargements, never before extant, by their worthy successors and true posterity; persons, whose mouths are too foul to be cleansed, and too broad to be stop'd.

But they are in nothing so copious and eloquent as, when they amplify and declaim upon that old, beaten, misapplied theme of persecution. Which charge, if true, yet they of all men living were the most unfit to make it. But I shall not busy myself to confute, much less to retaliate their aspersions.

3. In the third and last place, they may oppose the governors and government of the church

church by open force; and this is fighting indeed; but yet the genuine, natural consequent of the other: he that rails, having opportunity would rebel; for it is the same malice in a various posture, in a different way of eruption; and as he that rebels shows *what he can do*, so he that rails does as really demonstrate *what he would do*.

The reason of the thing itself does evince this, and what is yet a greater reason, experience; and he that will not believe what he has felt, nor credit the experience of twenty years, deserves to undergo it for twenty years more.

As the trumpet gives an alarm to the battle, so bold invectives do as certainly alarm the trumpet; it is the same breath by which men utter the one, and blow the other.

What insurrections, what attempts, what tumults they may make, we know not; but we know their principles, and we have sufficiently seen them illustrated in their practices; and therefore from what *has been done*, do but rationally collect *what may*.

We have heard much of the *power of godliness*, by which indeed is meant only *the godly party being in power*; and the godly party with them are those who have sworn the destruction of monarchy and of the church, and have bewitched the people with a fardle of strange, canting, insignificant words.

*

G

And

And let men know, that notwithstanding the disguise of a whining expression, and a demure face; there is no sort of men breathing who taste blood with so good a relish, and who having the *power of the sword* to second their *power of godliness*, would wade deeper in the slaughter of their brethren, and with the most savage implacable violence, tumble all into confusion, ruin, and desolation.

The quick-silver of Geneva is a thing of a violent operation, and cannot lie still long, but it will force its vent through the bowels of a nation; and God grant, that it may be thoroughly purged out, before it becomes mortal and incurable. — And give us the defence of a prudent jealousy, to beware of those whose loyalty and submission lies only in their want of occasion.

We have now dispatched the two first things considerable in the text; in which, as in a set battle, we have seen the armour and preparations of defence in the first place, and the assault and opposition in the second. It remains now,

III. That, as in all fights, we see the issue and success, which is exhibited to us in these words, *But they shall not prevail against thee.*

It is a bold venture, to foretel things future, because it is infamous to lie under the shame
of

S E R M O N IV. 83

of a mistaken prediction, and some, if they had *prophefied left*, perhaps would have *preach-ed* better.

Things future fall under human cognizance only these two ways:

1. By a foresight of them in their causes.
2. By divine revelation.

For the first of these, moral causes will afford but a moral certainty; but so far as the light of this shines, it gives us a good prospect into our future success.

For which is most likely to prevail, a force marshalled into order, or disrank'd and scattered into confusion. A force united and compacted with the strength of agreement, or a force shrivell'd into parties, and crumbled into infinite subdivisons. A government confirmed by age, and rooted by antiquity, and withal complying with the conveniences of society; or a government sprung up but yesterday, and yet become intolerable to day; having the rigour, without the order of discipline; like a rod or twig, both for its smart, and also for its weakness.

But besides the arguments of reason, we have the surer ground of divine revelation. God has engaged his assistance, made himself a party, and obliged his omnipotence as a second in the cause; *I am with thee, to save thee and deliver thee, saith the Lord.* We have something more to plead than God's

84 S E R M O N IV.

providence their old heathenish arguments.

We have his word for our rule, and his promise for our support. He that undertakes God's work, may, by a legitimacy of claim, challenge his assistance.

Yet neither are we destitute of arguments from providence, so far as they may be pleaded. — For has God by a miracle raised a church from the dead only to make it capable of a second destruction? has he buoyed it up from the gulfs and quicksands of faction and sacrilege, only to split it upon the rocks of a new rebellion? Has he scattered those mists of delusion, discovered the cheat of a long, religious fallacy, and so strangely opened mens eyes, that he may more strangely put them out again? or will Christ invert the order of his works, and having cured us, do another miracle only to make us blind?

No certainly, for as God does not create but with a design to preserve; so he does not deliver, but with a purpose to defend.

But you will say, does not our own late experience stare us in the face, and confute this assertion? for has not the church been exposed to the lust, fury, and rapine of her adversaries? have they not *prevailed* and trampled upon her? have they not ruined, reformed, and torn her in pieces as they pleased? and what assurance have we, that, what has been done already, may not be done again? and then, what

S E R M O N IV. 85

what will become of the truth of this, *they shall not prevail against thee.*

To this I answer two things, with which I shall conclude.

I. That even those enemies of the church in the late dismal swing of confusion, did not prevail against her. For that only is a prevailing, that is, a final conquest.

But this was only a cloud that hindred the sunshine for a while, but did not put out the sun. A veil drawn over the churches faces, not to extinguish her beauty, but to hide it for a time. In short it was only an interruption, not an abolition of her happiness.

2. But 2dly, I add that he who is pillaged or murdered in the resolute performance of his duty, is not properly prevailed against.

It has been a constant tradition of the church, that Jeremy himself, to whom this very promise was made, was barbarously knock'd o' the head and killed in Egypt, for his impartial prophesying; yet still, this promise was the word of God, and therefore doubtless could not fall to the ground, however the prophet might.

There is a great deal of difference between a murder and a conquest.

So that should God again let loose the reins to the former tyranny; should he once more give the sword to faction, ignorance, and discontent; and arm the diabolical legion that lately possess'd us, and has been since cast out;

should he commission all this rabble, to harrass and run down the nation with plunders, bloodshed, covenants, and sequestrations; yet still God will verify these words to every faithful courageous officer in his church, *they shall not prevail against thee.*

Such an one may be plundered indeed, and yet not undone; he may be sequestred, imprison'd, yea and slain, and yet, according to the soberest judgment of reason, *not conquered.*

Some may now think, that the work of this exercise is not discharged, unless directions are given for the management of the episcopal office; but I persuade myself, that our government advances none to this office, but such as are able to direct themselves. However I, for my part, had rather promise obedience, than proffer counsel to my superiors.

The business I undertook was, to speak encouragement to those that shall sit at the stern of the church in such a discouraging age, and to tell them that God will make them fenced brazen walls. And he that strikes at a wall of brass may maul his own hands, but neither shake nor demolish that.

Wherefore let the furies of a new confusion break forth, let the spiritual trumpets sound another march to rebellion, and the pulpit drums beat up for volunteers for the devil, and threaten the church once more.

Yet the governors of it may here take
sanctuary

S E R M O N IV. 87

sanctuary in the text; and with confidence from hence bespeak their opposers.

Who shall fight against us? it is God *that saves*, who shall destroy? it is the same God *that delivers*.

To which God fearful in praises and working wonders, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty and dominion both now and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N V.

TITUS i. i.

Paul a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging the truth which is after godliness.

IN the last words of this verse, about which only our present discourse shall be concerned, we have a full though compendious account of the nature of the gospel, ennobled by two excellent qualities. One the end of all philosophical enquiries, which is *truth*; the other the design of all religious institutions, which is *godliness*; both united, and as it were blended together in the constitution of Christianity.

Those who discourse metaphysically of the nature of truth, as to the reality of the thing, affirm

S E R M O N V. 89

affirm a perfect coincidence between truth and goodness; and I believe it might be easily made out, that there is nothing in nature perfectly true but what is also really good. For although it is not to be denied that true propositions may be framed of things in themselves *evil*, yet still it is certain that the truth of those propositions is *good*. Nothing so bad as the devil or worse than a liar, yet this affirmation, that *the devil is a liar* is hugely true and very good.

It would be endless to strike forth into the eulogies of truth; for as we know, it was the adored prize for which the sublimest wits in the world have always run, and sacrificed their time, their health, their lives to the acquirement of it; so let it suffice us to say here, that as reason is the great rule of man's nature, so truth is the great regulator of reason.

I. Now in this expression of the gospel's being *the truth which is after godliness*, these three things are couched.

1. That it is simply a truth.
2. That it is an operative truth.
3. That it is operative to the best of effects, which is godliness.

1. And first for the first of these; it is a truth, and upon that account dares look its most inquisitive adversaries in the face. The most intricate and mysterious passages in it are vouched by an infinite veracity; and truth is truth, tho' clothed in riddles, and surrounded

ed with darkness and obscurity: as the sun has still the same native inherent brightness, tho' wrapt up in a cloud.

Even those transcendent ænigma's of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the resurrection of the dead, they all challenge our assent upon the score of their truth. And that three is one and one three, is altogether as true as that *three is three*, tho' far from being so plain. It is hard indeed to conceive a reparation of the same numerical body having been transformed by so many changes, yet we have the divine word for it; and death itself is not more sure, than that men shall rise from the dead.

Now the gospel being a truth, it follows yet further, that if we run thro' the whole catalogue of its principles, nothing can be drawn from thence, by legitimate and certain consequence, but what is also true. It is impossible for truth to afford any thing but truth. Every such principle begets a consequence after its own likeness.

2. The next advance of the gospel's excellency is, that it is such a truth as is operative. It does not terminate in notion, or rest in bare unactive speculation, but from the head it shoots forth into the hand, and sets all the faculties of our nature at work. It does not dwell in the mind like furniture, only for ornament, but for use, and the great concerns of life. Most sorts of human knowledge

ledge are like the treasures of a covetous man, got with labour and much industry; and being got, they lie locked up, and wholly unemployed. And indeed, the very nature of them abstracts from practice. The knowledge of astronomy, geometry, arithmetick, musick, and the like, they may fill the mind, and yet never step forth into one experiment; but the knowledge of the divine truths of christianity is quick and restless, like an imprisoned flame, which will be sure to force its passage, and to display its brightness.

3. The third and highest degree of its perfection is, that it is not only operative, but also operative to the best of purposes, which is to godliness. It carries on a design for heaven and eternity. Some things are indeed active, but the design of their action is trivial, cheap and contemptible; so that, in effect, it is no more than a sedulous and a laborious doing of nothing; which kind of actions, should they be arrested with that question, *cui bono*, the vanity of such performances would quickly appear, that they were but a shooting without any aim, a raising of a bubble, and a pursuing of the wind. Every thing is ennobled by its design; and an action is advanced in its worth, when it drives at an object grand and necessary, *John xvii. 3. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and whom thou hast sent, Christ Jesus.* It serves the two greatest interests in the world, which

which are, the glory of the creator, and the salvation of the creature; and this the gospel does by being *the truth which is after godliness*.

Which words may admit of a double sense.

1. That the gospel is so called, because it actually produces the effects of godliness in those that embrace and profess it. 2. That it is directly improvable into such consequences and deductions, as have in them a natural fitness, if complied with, to engage the practice of mankind in such a course.

In the former of these senses, the gospel cannot universally sustain this appellation; forasmuch as in many hearts it is no sooner conceived, but it proves abortive; and like the seed falling upon stony ground, it is choaked by the thorns of cares and lusts, and other corruptions growing up and hindering it, so that it never brings forth fruit to perfection. Many entertain principles which they defy by their practices, and unlive all that they have believed; so that that which was intended for the cure of sin, by accident becomes its aggravation. Wherefore the latter sense only can take place here; that is, that the gospel, in its nature, is the most apt and proper instrument of holiness in the world, the most naturally productive of holy living and a pious conversation; unless a man prevaricates with the articles of his faith, runs counter to his profession, and acts contradictions.

Now

Now the truth that we have declared to have thus an influence upon godliness, consists in these two things.

1. A right notion of God.
2. A right notion of what concerns the duty of man.

These two are the foundations of all sound and rational piety; and as it is a matter of great moment, so it is also of great difficulty, so to assert and state each of these, both in their just latitude and yet within their due limits, that one may not entrench upon or evacuate the other.

It highly concerns us so to discourse of God in the matter of religion, that his prerogative of being the first cause of all things, and both the author and finisher of man's salvation, be not infringed by such assertions as of necessity infer the contrary. And yet, on the other side, this prerogative of God is to be defended with such sobriety, as not in the mean time to leave the creature no scope of duty, or to render all exhortations and threatnings, and other helps of action, absurd and superfluous. The difficulty of doing right to both which, appears from this; that those who endeavour to assert one, usually encroach upon the other.

As for instance: some of those who manage the defence of God's prerogative in being the first cause of all things, and sovereign author of our salvation, assert that the creature

creature never advances into action, but by an irresistible pre-determination of the faculty to that action; upon the presence of which pre-determination the faculty cannot but act, and upon the absence or defect of which, it cannot possibly move or determine itself. And then, over and above this pre-determination, they assert a concurrence of God to that action of the power or faculty, perfectly the same with that action. Which assertions, in spite of all qualifications of them, leave it unapprehensible what place can reasonably be left for addressing exhortations to the will, when it is not at all in its power to proceed to the performance of the thing to which it is exhorted, but solely in the power of him that exhorts.

On the contrary; those who would redeem the will from this inactivity, usually extend the freedom of it to that compass, as to make God a meer stander-by in the great business of the soul's salvation; it being at the courtesy of the will's choice and acceptance, whether all that God does towards the saving of a man, shall, in the issue, become effectual or not effectual to that purpose. Such will not allow any thing to be liberty of will, but a perfect equilibrium and indifferency of choice as to good or evil; which for *Papists* to assert, who in this assertion lay the foundation of their pretended merits, is no wonder; but why *Protestants* should

should be so fond of it, I see no reason: For that this indifferency to good and evil is not of the intrinsic nature and essence of the will's liberty, is clear from this; that then the saints, who are confirmed in the love of God and goodness, so that they cannot sin, or choose that which is evil, could not be said to love God freely; nor the devils to sin freely, for they cannot choose but sin; nor *Christ* to have done actions of holiness freely, for he could not do otherwise. Besides that the supposition of original sin, and the total depravation of man's nature, renders such a liberty in those that are not renewed by baptism, strangely absurd; for it is an apparent making of a corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit.

But you will say, that this nullifies all exhortations to piety; since a man, in this case, cannot totally come up to the thing he is exhorted to. But to this I answer, that the consequence does not hold: for an exhortation is not frustrate, if a man be but able to come up to it partially, though not entirely and perfectly. As, take a man under the original depravation of nature; though in this condition he cannot avoid all sin, both as to the matter and manner of the action, yet there is no particular sin but he may forbear; though the imperfection and obliquity of the end or motive inducing him so to forbear it, makes the manner of that forbearance
not

not wholly void of fault. A man unregenerate, and unrenewed by grace, may choose whether he will be drunk, fornicate, or swear; but it is not in his power to be acted to these forbearances, out of a love to God, to piety, or virtue; and yet if they proceed not from such a principle, such forbearances are, in the sight of God, but faulty and imperfect.

I am not ignorant, that in giving an account of these matters there is a knot on both sides; and that upon a nice screwing of consequences not easily to be resolved; yet surely it concerns us so to discourse of these points in general, as neither to clip the divine prerogative, nor yet, on the other hand, to tie up the creature so, as to undermine duty by taking away the energy of precepts, threatnings, and exhortations.

II. To proceed therefore. There are three things that I shall deduce from this description of the gospel's being the truth according to godliness.

1. That the nature and prime essential design of religion, is to be an instrument of good life, by administering arguments and motives inducing to it.

2. That so much knowledge of truth, as is sufficient to engage mens lives in the practice of godliness, serves the necessary ends of religion.

For I shew, if godliness were the design, it ought also, by consequence, to be the measure of mens knowledge in this particular.

3. That

3. That whatsoever doth in itself, or its direct consequences, undermines the motives of a good life, is contrary to, and destructive of Christian Religion.

1. That the nature and prime essential design of religion, is to be an instrument of good life, by administering arguments and motives inducing to it.

It were to be wished, that to produce reasons and proofs for such a proposition were wholly needless and vain; yet since the capricious and phantastic notions of some men have made it much otherwise, I shall endeavour to clear up the assertion I have laid down, by these arguments.

1. The first is, because religion designs the service of God, by gaining over to his obedience that which is most excellent in man, and that is the actions of his life, and continual converse. That these are the most considerable, is clear from hence; because all other actions naturally proceed in a subserviency to these. As the actions of a man's understanding, directing, and of his will commanding, they are all designed for the regulation of his constant behaviour; and that which is the end to which other things are designed, is, as such, more excellent than those things designed to that end.

2. The design of religion is man's salvation. But men are not saved as they are more knowing, or assent to more propositions, but as they are more pious than others. Practice is the

*

H

thing

thing that sanctifies knowledge; and faith without works expires, and becomes a dead thing, a carcase; and consequently noysome to God; who, even to those who know the best things, pronounces no blessing till they do them. Upon this ground it is, that when a man would gather some comfortable assurance of his future estate, he does not seek for evidences from his knowledge, and the boldness of his belief, but from his godliness, and the several instances of an holy life, the only infallible demonstration of a sincere heart; otherwise, it is probable that hell is paved with the heads of the knowing and the wicked, and the catalogue of the damned made up of such as knew their master's will, and did it not.

3. A third argument is from hence, that the discriminating excellency of Christianity consists not so much in this, that it discovers more sublime truths, or indeed more excellent precepts than philosophy (tho' it does this also) as that it suggests more efficacious arguments to enforce the performance of those precepts, than any other religion or institution whatsoever. Compare the precepts of Pythagoras, of the Stoics, and of Christian religion; does Christian religion commend piety towards God, and justice to our neighbour? does it arraign vitious affections and corrupt desires? so do they. Wherein then has it the preheminance? why in this; that after they had taught the world their duty, what they were to do, and what not to do, they had no arguments prevalent

prevalent with the nature of men, above their contrary propensions; to bind them over to such practices: .

But Christianity has back'd all its precepts with eternal life and eternal death to the performers or neglecters of them; whereas philosophy could do nothing, but by taking in the assistance of fabulous stories, or by telling men, that virtue was a sufficient reward to itself; which, upon all experience, has been found an argument infinitely short, and unable to bear up the practices of men, contrary to the solicitations of their opposite impetuous corruptions.

4. The fourth and last argument is from this; that notwithstanding the diversity of religions in the world, yet men hereafter will generally be condemned for the same things; that is, for their breaches of morality. Men shall be condemned for being false, lustful, injurious, profane, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and the like. But these are the sins of all nations, and are universally found in the profession of all religions.

'Tis confessed there shall be an accession to men's guilt, and more or less fuel added to their torments, according as the religion they lived under administered to them clearer or obscurer notions of duty, and more or less pregnant instructions to the exercise of piety; otherwise, men shall not so much be condemned for not believing of riddles and hard sentences, as for not practising of plain duties.

For this is that which religion drives at ; not to subtilize mens conceptions, but to rectify their manners.

And these are briefly my reasons for the first deduction from the words, namely, that the nature and prime essential design of religion is to be an instrument of good life, by administering arguments and motives inducing to it.

2. A second inference from the gospel's being the truth according to godliness, is this.

That so much knowledge of truth as is sufficient to engage mens lives in the practice of godliness, serves the necessary ends of religion ; for if godliness be the design, it ought also, by consequence, to be the measure of mens knowledge in this particular. Which consideration, well and duly improved, would discover how needless it is, to say no more, that ignorant people should be let loose to read and judge of writings that they do not understand. The principles of Christianity, briefly and catechistically taught them, is enough to save their souls ; but, on the other hand, they may read themselves into such opinions and persuasions, as may, at length, destroy a government, and fire a whole kingdom : and for this I shall not seek for arguments, after experience.

3. The third and great consequence, from the gospel's being the truth according to godliness, shall be this.

That whatsoever does in itself, or its direct
con-

S E R M O N V. 101

consequences, undermine the motives of a good life, is contrary to, and destructive of Christian religion.

Now the doctrines that more immediately concern a good life, are reducible to these three heads:

1. Such as concern the justification of a sinner.

2. Such as concern the rule of manners.

3. And such as concern repentance.

All which things are such vital ingredients of religion, that an error in any of them is like poison in a fountain, which must certainly convey death and contagion to every one that shall taste the streams. It will be of some moment therefore to bring the doctrines that lie under these several Heads to a particular examination, that so having a distinct view of life and death before us, we may both secure our choice and direct our practice.

First of all then, concerning the justification of a sinner. The great business that we have in this world, is to endeavour to be saved, and the means to that is to be justified. This, therefore, is the great mark at which all our actions are to be levelled, the great prize for which we run: and, consequently, if it is not stated and proposed to us upon such terms as shall imploy and call forth the utmost attempts of the soul, the nerves of piety are cut, and obedience is overlaid by bytaking away its necessity. How this may be done, let us take a brief survey.

1. First then, that doctrine that holds that the covenant of grace is not established upon conditions, and that nothing of performance is required on man's part to give him an interest in it, but only to believe that he is justified ; this certainly subverts all the motives of a good life. But this is the doctrine of the Antinomians : and the foundation of this they have laid in another wild erroneous assertion, that every believer was actually justified from eternity, and that his faith is only a declaration of this to his conscience, but no ways effective of any alteration of his state or condition. Justified in the sight of God he was before his belief, but his belief, at length, gives him the knowledge of it ; and so makes him not more safe, but more confident than he was before.

But, certainly, this inevitably takes away the necessity of godliness : for it asserts that a sinner, and an ungodly person, while such, may stand justified before God. For the better understanding of which we must observe, that a man may be said to be a sinner in a double respect : 1. In respect of the law, as having not continued in all things written in the law, to do them. 2. In respect of the gospel, as having not believed and repented ; which are the terms upon which, thro' Christ, we are accepted as righteous.

As for the former of these respects, all men are sinners upon a legal score, as not having performed

performed an entire, indefective, legal obedience. But in the latter sense, upon evangelical allowances, a man that believes, is not counted to be in a state of sin, tho', legally, he is.

Now the forementioned doctrine allows justification to these sinners also; for if a man is actually and perfectly justified from all eternity, whereas he comes but in some period of his life to believe and repent, does it not invincibly follow, that he was justified before that belief and repentance; and, consequently, while he was under an estate of unbelief and impenitence? which assertion is the very bane of all piety and gospel obedience. It dashes all industry in the ways of holiness, lodges a man's hands in his bosom, and renders a pious life superfluous and precarious?

2. That doctrine that teaches that a man may be accepted with God for the righteousness and merits of other saints, poisons and perverts the nature of justification, so as to render it utterly ineffectual to engage men in a course of godliness. For if there is a treasury of good works and merits deposited in the custody of the church, and to be dispensed by her to whom she pleases, for all the purposes of salvation, a man need not be rich in good works of his own, provided he be rich enough in money to purchase himself a propriety in those of other men. So that it is not a good life, but a good purse that is neces-

104 S E R M O N V.

sary to the justification of a sinner: yet upon such wretched doctrines as these, is built one of the most externally glorious fabricks that the world has yet seen.

But it will be objected, perhaps, that the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ does equally evacuate all motives to a good life; for if his righteousness, which is infinitely perfect and exact, be imputed to us, what need we produce any of our own? To this I answer, that the reason is not the same. For tho' the righteousness of Christ be imputed to us, yet it renders not a good life on our part needless, since this is made the very condition of that imputation. That is, if we fill the measures of sincerity, in doing the utmost that we are able, Christ's righteousness shall be imputed to us for justification, notwithstanding our failing in many things, which, by reason of the infirmities of our nature, we have not done. Thus, therefore, the imputation of Christ's righteousness is suspended upon a man's own personal righteousness, as its necessary antecedent condition.

But now it is otherwise in the imputation of the merits of the saints to any man, since this cannot proceed upon any such condition of personal obedience on his part. For thus the argument against it will run; either that man does the utmost that he is able, and lives as well as he can, according to the terms of evangelical sincerity, or he does not; if he
does,

does, then what need can he have of the righteousness and merits of the saints, who themselves were able to do no more while they lived in the flesh ? But if he does not acquit himself in an holy life, and it be admitted that the righteousness of the saints may supply such a defect, so as to render the man accepted before God ; is it not as clear as the sun, that by this means the sinner is discharged from pressing after godliness, as necessary to his justification ? For, it seems, he may want it, and yet for all that have his business done to his hand.

How much the great God has been dishonoured, and how many poor souls have been murdered, by such assertions as these, is sad to consider ; for they have been abused into a confidence in, and reliance upon, such supports ; which, in the invaluable concerns of eternity, have deceived and given them the slip, and let them fall without remedy into the bottomless gulf of endless perdition. God amend or rebuke such pernicious impostors.

In the next place, let us consider the doctrines that relate to the rule of life and manners, which is the law of God.

1. First then, that doctrine that exempts all believers from the obligation of the moral law, is directly destructive of all godliness ; which doctrine is taught and asserted by the Antinomians, who from thence derive that name, as being opposers of the law. But
now

now if there be no obligation upon men to the duties of the moral law, how can it be necessary for them to perform any such duties ; and, consequently, the command of loving God with all their strength and all their soul, of not worshipping images, of not dishonouring God's name, of obeying parents, of not committing murder, and adultery, and the like, concerns not these persons. But if this be their opinion, it is well that they are not able to escape the force of human laws, as they do the obligation of the divine.

I confess the apostle Paul oftentimes opposes *the law to grace*, and affirms of believers, that they are not under *the law*, but under *grace*. But what does he mean by these expressions? why his meaning is founded upon a twofold acceptation of the law.

1. That it may be taken as a covenant conveying life, upon absolute, entire, indefectible obedience, and awarding death to those who fail in the least iota or punctilio.

2. It may be taken as a rule of life, and a transcript of the duty of man.

Now it is in the former sense only that believers are not under the law, for if they were, they could not possibly be saved, since all men have sinned, and the law, as a covenant, promises life only upon the terms of such an exact obedience, as excludes all sin. But the covenant of grace, under which believers are,
promises

promises life upon condition of such obedience as is sincere, tho' legally imperfect: that is, such an one as is not absolutely exclusive of all sin, but only of the reign, and power, and dominion of sin.

Yet all this does not loose them from the obligation of the law as it is a rule of life, to which they are to conform their actions. The law tells believers what they are to do, and withal obliges them to do it; but what measure of obedience will be accepted of a man, in order to his salvation, that is determined not by this rule, but by the covenant of grace declared in the gospel; which, upon the account of Christ's merits, pardons and dispenses with many deviations from that strict rule, and condemns for none, but such as are inconsistent with a state of sincerity.

The fore-mention'd persons, who cashier this obligation of the law also, and admit it for not so much as a rule; resigning themselves up to the sole conduct of their own heart, which they call the spirit; these, I say, as needs they must, assert also, that believers cannot sin: for since sin is a transgression of a law, it roundly follows, that those who are obliged to no law, can be guilty of no transgression.

But this doctrine is so broadly impious, that it does not undermine a good life, but directly blow it down. And therefore I shall only say this of the abettors of it, that those who
can

can own themselves to be without *sin*, demonstrate themselves to be without *shame*.

2. That doctrine which asserts any sin to be, in its nature, *venial*, that is such as God cannot in justice punish with damnation, tends to subvert a good life: but the doctrine of the church of Rome asserts this; and lays the foundation of this assertion in a distinction between works done *against the law*, and works done *beside the law*. Now they say a thing is done *beside the law*, when tho' it is a deviation from the law, yet it is not contrary to the end of the law, which is love to God, but very fairly consistent with it: that is, tho' a man does such and such things, yet the doing of them ejects not the love of God out of his heart, and so long the design and purpose of the law is served and complied with, notwithstanding all such diminutive transgressions.

But this discourse is very weak and impertinent. For when they say, that some actions destroy not the creature's love to God, and so are only *beside the law*, as not overthrowing the *end* of it; they either understand that those actions destroy not that love as to the habit, or the act. If they intend the former, they speak nothing to the purpose; for an action may be sinful, and yet not drive the principle of habitual love to God out of the soul; forasmuch as an habit is not destroyed by every contrary action: as a man may be habitually

tually holy, and yet sometimes be surprized with the commission of unholy actions; and as to the main, a wise man, tho', possibly, he may have spoke or done some things in his life unwisely. But however, neither the holiness of one, or the wisdom of the other, makes an unholy or unwise action to be upon that account holy or wise.

But if, on the other side, they assert, that these *kind of sins*, interrupt not the actual exercise of the creature's love to God, they will prove that, which I believe was never yet proved; namely, that it is possible for a man in one and the same action, to deviate from the law of God, and yet to exert an act of love towards him; which, indeed, amounts to a plain contradiction: for since to love God is to perform his commands, if we assert that that love is not for the present hindered, or intermitted, by some transgressions of those commands; does it not clearly follow, that a man may perform the command, and yet transgress it at the same time, and in the very same action?

But it is not directly my business to insist here upon the absurdity of this doctrine, but to demonstrate the impiety of it, so far as it tends to abate mens endeavours in the pursuit of a stricter course of holiness; which, surely it does with a very great and pernicious efficacy. For if men can pervert their judgments so, as to look upon some deviations from

110 S E R M O N V.

from the law of God; the great rule of life; as no sins, taking sin strictly and properly; they will proceed to a general undervaluation of the nature of sin; and, keeping a due proportion, if small sins must pass for no sins; the greatest sins must lose many degrees of their greatness. The heart of man will insensibly be wrought upon to make a sport of sin, and to trifle with two the most dreadful things in the world, a strict law, and an infinite justice.

But there are no two things that seem to bear so great a resemblance one to another, as the state of the Christian church perverted by the doctors of the church of Rome, and the state of the Jewish church corrupted by the glosses and doctrines of the Pharisees. For as the Romists hold fast the distinction of mortal and venial sins; so the Pharisees, with the same result, distinguish'd of the divine precepts and commandments; that some were *great*, that is, necessary to be observed, and some *small*, that is, such as did not bind the conscience with so strict an obligation, but that the violation of them might, with a very fair comportment with the divine justice, be dispensed with. And 'tis with direct allusion to this distinction of theirs, that our Saviour speaks in *Math. v. 19. Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men to do so, he shall be called the least*

in

S E R M O N V. 111

in the kingdom of heaven ; that is, in the Hebrew dialect, he shall have nothing to do there at all : *least* being here not only a term of diminution, but of absolute negation.

The meaning and design of those words was Christ's clearing himself from the common imputation that the Scribes and Pharisees loaded him with, of being an underminer of the law of Moses. As if he had said, I am so far from having an intent to *destroy* or untie the binding force of the law, that I enforce a stricter observation of it than those that make this charge against me. For whereas they teach that some of the divine commandments are to be reputed *little*, and such as men are not bound to the *strict* observance of ; I, on the contrary, affirm, that there are no such *little* commands (as they call them) but that the very least of them obliges so indispensably, that the violation and neglect of it will, without repentance, exclude from heaven, and bind over to damnation.

And no question, but were he now amongst us he would rebuke the modern Pharisees, and patrons of venial sins, in the same manner : who, by that unhallowed distinction, have lopp'd off a large proportion of that obliging force that belongs to every divine precept, and so, in effect, have made the law itself faulty and defective ; not obliging where men are pleas'd not to be obliged ; and making that

to

112 S E R M O N V.

to be no duty, which licentious persons are unwilling should be so. Indeed, he that sins against the law is bad enough, but he that makes even the law to sin, that he may discharge himself, is incurable and insufferable.

S E R-

S E R M O N VI.

I TITUS ~~Y~~ I.

*The acknowledging the truth which is
after godliness.*

III. **T**HAT doctrine that asserts, that it is in mens power to supererogate, and to do works of perfection over and above what is required of them by way of precept, tends to the undermining and hindrance of a godly life. Works of evangelical perfection or supererogation are defined, such as a man may without sin not do, but if he does them, they intitle him to a greater reward. Which assertion carries along with it this visible impiety, that a man is not obliged to do the utmost in the way of holiness that he can; for the law is the measure of mens obligation, and no man is obliged to any thing as his duty, but what the law obliges him to: but if it is in his power to do some sublime works of holiness, over and above what the law exacts of him, it clearly
I follows,

114 S E R M O N VI.

follows, that without sin he may omit the doing of them, for where there is no law there is no sin: and here we suppose the obligation of the law not to extend thus far.

Now surely there can be no greater a stop to an active endeavour, than to state the proportions of mens duty less than the proportions of their strength and ability; and to assure them, that they do all that is necessary for them to do, tho' they do much less than they are able. It seems by this, that God does not call for all their strength and all their souls, but they have great reserves of both left entirely in their own disposal; nay, and those of much greater worth and excellence than what the law demands from them; since the doing of these advances them to an higher perfection, and prepares for them a greater and a brighter crown than all the rest of their obedience.

But if this were so, how shall we make out the sense of those precepts that command us *to strive to enter into the strait gate, and to press forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling, and to use our utmost diligence to make our calling and election sure, that having done all, we may be able to stand*; and the like. Certainly these are expressions that stretch endeavours to the highest, and determine in no less compass than the whole, that a man by all the powers and faculties of his soul, can perform.

Nor

Nor can it avail the persons that we contend with, to reply, that God vouchsafes us those assistances of grace, that are able to bear men beyond the lines of mere duty ; for the dispensations of grace would, upon these terms, put us into the same condition of perfection, that we are to expect only in a state of glory. Grace indeed extinguishes the reign of sin, but it does not wholly extirpate the inherence of it as to all the remainders. It makes a man that he will not devote and give himself over to the practice of sin, but it does not wholly rescue him from the surprize of many infirmities.

And were not these men fuller of pride than perfection, and more Pharisees than Christians, they would acknowledge so much, and let down those gaudy plumes of their high pretences of a double refined sanctity, upon the sight of their black feet and polluted goings. For surely they have not yet convinced the world of the feasibility and truth of their propositions, by any manifest transcriptions of them upon their lives. But can these doctors style themselves angelical, from any thing that they do, whatsoever they are pleased to teach? I cannot see but that a friar or a jesuit is subject to the same passions and irregular motions, that other men are. Nor can I perceive that their lives proceed in in such a supernatural strictness, and transcendency

dency of piety, above the rest of the world. They should do well to prove their doctrines of perfection, by instance and example; and to demonstrate that a thing may be done, by shewing that actually it has been done; but if they cannot, they should first acquit themselves in point of duty, before they flourish it with their supererogations; and think of paying their debts, before they go about to purchase.

Besides, to assert that the perfection commanded by the law, is less than the perfection that the power of man can raise itself to, seems an high imputation upon God's wisdom and holiness, as he is a legislator; the design of which must needs be, to work up the creature to the highest conformity to himself, that a created nature is capable of. But he that instead of stretching himself to the latitude of the law, contracts the law to his own measures, will find that God, when he comes to deal with him, will have recourse to his own rule, and not correct a true original by a false copy.

4. That doctrine that places it in the power of any mere mortal man to dispense with the laws of Christ, so as to discharge any man, in any case, from being obliged by them, is highly destructive of holy living: but so does the doctrine of the church of Rome, that vests such a dispensing power in

in the pope; by which they raise the pretended chair of St. Peter above the throne of Christ himself: For the sovereign power resides not so much in him that makes the law, as in him that is able to do with the law what he pleases when it is made, by either continuing or suspending the obligation of it. Christ indeed has given laws to his church; but when it is at the pope's pleasure, whether those laws shall oblige or not oblige, I leave it to the judgment of the meanest reason, who, in this case, must be accounted superior,

The laws of men are dispensable, because the nature of them subjects them to the reason of dispensation; that is, because no human law-giver is of that wisdom, as to provide against all future inconveniences, in the constitution of laws, but that the observation of them may sometimes run men upon greater mischiefs than the making of them was designed to prevent: but Christ was of that infinite wisdom and knowledge, as to enact laws of that universal compliance with all the conditions of man, that there can be no new emergent inconvenience unforeseen by him, that should at any time make the obligation of them to cease.

It is possible indeed, that the law may cease to oblige, upon the removal or want of the matter of the obligation. As it is

118 S E R M O N VI.

every man's duty to give alms, but if a man has nothing, he can give nothing; and to communicate is a duty, but if the materials of the sacrament bread and wine cannot be had, to communicate is impossible, and so no man can be obliged to it: But still, in all this, there is no dispensation with either of these laws; for the impossibility of their performance, makes them, to such persons, under such circumstances, cease to be laws. But a law is then properly dispensed with, when it is capable of being obeyed; and the person capable of yielding such obedience to it, is yet, by an intervenient power, discharged from his obligation to obey: the former case is like fire's not burning, when it has no fuel or matter to fasten or prey upon; the latter is like the fire's not burning the three children in the furnace, when both the fire was in full force, and also a proper combustible subject offered to it; but by the interposal of a divine power, it was hindered from exerting that burning quality upon that subject. So here, the law is in full force, and the person under it, in a capacity to do the thing commanded by it; but the pope tells him, that he shall not be obliged to it, he will dispense with him, and so the labour of obeying is saved.

But since bold encroachments seldom venture themselves without pretences, it concerns us to see what reason the pope assigns for

for his exercising such a power over the laws of Christ. Why, his spiritual janizaries, the school-men and casuists tell us, that where the observation of any command is *impedativa majoris boni*, a stop and hindrance of a greater good than the non-observance of it would occasion, there the pope has power to dispense with the observation of that command, and to discharge men from it.

As for instance: A man has bound himself with a lawful vow or oath, and accordingly proceeds to the execution of it; but the priest finds, that the greatness of their church would be considerably advantaged by this person's not observing his vow or oath, and accordingly perswades him to break it; but the man's conscience is solicitous and tender, and asks who shall warrant him in the breach of a lawful oath: hereupon, the pope says, that he will; and tho' the law of God and nature ties a man to the keeping of his oath, yet because the not keeping of it will minister to a greater good, namely, the advantage of the church, this is a sufficient reason for him to dispense with his oath: For answer to which, I would enquire, whether the command of keeping oaths and vows is not clear and express; and whether there can be any greater good, than to obey an express command of God. I demand also, supposing that the advancement of their church be indeed a greater good, yet, whether

ther the intending of such a good can legitimate an action, in its nature sinful? and whether the breach of a clear command be not such an one? When these questions receive a full and a satisfactory resolution, then may the conscience acquiesce in the pope's dispensation; but 'till then, 'tis safer to obey God in the precept, than man in the interpretation of it.

And now, who is there that deserves the name of a Christian, whose heart does not rise against such horrid and impious usurpations upon the prerogative of Christ? such gross and open methods of promoting the course of sin? If a command of Christ thwart that which the pope, in the behalf of his own interest, will judge a greater good, the command must stand back, and his dispensation take place. All such bands upon the conscience are like the withs, or the cords upon Sampson, they fly asunder like flax burnt with fire; they are of no force or efficacy at all. For as it is in the pope's power to dispense with a command, so it is also solely in his power to judge of the reason upon which he is to dispense with it; and we know that he is seldom the poorer for such dispensations.

The truth is, he exposes the precepts of Christ to sale, and he that will bid most for the breach of a command shall carry it: which is such an entrenching upon all the offices of Christ, such an impudent defiance
of

of that supremacy of which he pretends to be the vicar and substitute, that it is apparent that saint Peter's pretended successor sells Christ's power, as much as ever Judas did his person. Here is the making merchandise of religion, and with that of souls : Here is the groundwork of indulgences, the quick market for pardons, by which the gospel, from the law of liberty, is turned into the instrument of licence ; and the sure asylum for such as would live sinners, and yet die saints.

And thus much for the doctrines that tend to the undermining of a pious life, by perverting the great rule of living, the law of Christ. I come now to the third sort, which

III. Are those that relate to repentance.

This follows in order of nature, for after a law is broke, there is no recovery but by repentance ; so that the depravation of the nature of this, is a sin against our last remedy ; and he that, having transgressed the divine law, abuses his conscience with false rules of repentance, does like a man that first by his intemperance brings himself into a disease, and then puts poison into his physick.

Now the doctrine about repentance may be perverted in a double respect :

1. In respect of the time of it.
2. In respect of the measure.

1. And first, for the doctrine that states the time of repentance destructively to a pious life

life. And for this it cannot but be very grievous and offensive, to persons possessed with a real piety and sense of religion, to consider the assertions and positions of the Romish casuists touching this particular. Their answer to this question, *When shall a sinner repent?* is, in general, *At any time whatsoever.* Which indefinite assertion has by some been drawn out into particular determinate periods of time : As some affirm, that it is a man's duty to act repentance on the grand holidays, as Christmas, Whitsontide, but especially at Easter. But others except against this as too severe, and say, that since God has not determined the time of repentance, we are to presume that the church also is so favourable as leave it undetermined too : And therefore some blush not to state the matter thus ; that the time in which a sinner is bound to repent, or to have contrition for his sins, is the article of imminent death, whether natural or violent. In a word, they say a man is bound to repent of his sins *once*, but when that *once* shall be, he may determine as he shall think fit.

Before I come to examine these profane assertions, I shall carefully premise this observation ; that in this whole matter, we are by no means to confound the *duty* of repentance with the *success* or *issue* of repentance. For altho' it is not to be denied, that a man having sinned, and afterwards defers his repentance,

S E R M O N VI. 123

ance for a long time, may yet, by the grace of God, repent savingly and effectually at last ; yet this makes nothing for the proving that it was not that man's duty to have repented immediately upon the commission of his sin ; and that every minute of such delay was not sinful. No man is to make the event of what he has done, the measure of what he ought to do. It is possible that a sinner may be converted, and turned to God, in the last year, or month, or perhaps day of his life ; but notwithstanding this he sinned, in not being converted to God before.

This premised by way of answer to the Romish casuists, I reply, That that sentence of the church, *At what time soever a sinner repenteth him of his sins, God will blot out his iniquities from before him*, speaks only of the consequent event and success of a true repentance, but determines nothing antecedently of the time in which that repentance is to begin ; which, in opposition to the foregoing blasphemies, we are undoubtedly to hold to be the very next instant after the commission of the sin : Then is the time in which it is the duty of a sinner to repent ; from that very moment there is an obligation upon him to recover himself by an hearty contrition and humiliation ; and that I prove by this argument : Either a man is bound immediately to repent after he has sinned, or the impenitence remaining upon him in that subsequent
portion

portion of time is no sin ; and if so, then in case he should die in that time, he could not be chargeable before God for that impenitence. Chargeable, indeed, he would be, for the sin he had committed ; but for *not repenting* of that sin, no charge could lie upon him. But this is an assertion of such barefac'd intolerable impiety, so directly contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel, that it can need no confutation.

However, it is worth considering, to see upon what ground our adversaries have built their assertion. And it is briefly this, That God obliges a sinner to repentance, not properly as to a duty but as to a punishment ; and being so, from the strength of this maxim, That nobody is bound in conscience to undergo a punishment till he is condemned ; and adding withal, that the day of danger, or approaching death, seems to be this arraignment and condemnation of a sinner, then they conclude, that, for his own security, it is incumbent upon him to submit to the penalty of repentance.

But to this I answer, first, That this supposition that repentance is properly a punishment, is, in a great measure, false. For repentance is properly the amendment of a man's life, and a passing from a state of sin to a state of holiness ; but this is not a punishment, but a perfection and a privilege. It is, indeed, accompanied with afflictive actions, such

such as sorrow and remorse for past sins ; but this is only by accident ; because a man cannot recover himself to newness of life, without such sorrowful reflections upon what is past ; otherwise, if amendment of life could be compassed without them, we should find that sorrow for sin was not the thing directly and chiefly intended in the precept of repentance.

It is clear therefore that repentance is not properly a punishment ; but whether it were so or no, that which was argued before from the nature of it, and the sinfulness of impenitence, sufficiently evinces that the practice of it is to be immediate : No man can, without sin, defer it till the morrow, any more than to the year after, or to that than to his death. For the words being indefinite, respect not one time more than another, and therefore the determination of the time must be fetched from the nature of the duty commanded in these words ; which since it determines for the present, it ought presently to be put in practice.

Add to this, that every moment passing without repentance, adds to the guilt and strength of sin unrepented of ; which lies not idle or unactive, but fixes its possession deeper and deeper ; the mind, by reflecting upon it with relish and complacency, grows into more intimate unions with it ; so that, in effect, by the internal actions and approbations

126 S E R M O N VI.

tions of the will it is repeated and re-acted, without any external commission. There is nothing more absolutely destructive of the very designs of religion, than to stop a sinner in his return to God, by persuading his corrupt heart, that he may prorogue that return with safety, and without any prejudice to his eternal concernments. Upon the best issue of things, it amounts to an exhortation to him to reap the pleasures of sin as long as he can ; and then, at last, that he may not also reap the fruits of sin, to submit to repentance as a less evil, but not to chuse it as a good. But whether he that has these notions of repentance, is ever like to arrive to the truth of repentance, he alone knows, who knows whether he will give such an one another heart or no. The doctrine therefore of a deferred repentance is a mischievous and a devilish doctrine, and like to bring those that trust in it to the Devil.

2. The next pernicious error about repentance relates to the measure of it. And here we will suppose the Romish casuists to recede from the former error, and to be fully orthodox as to the time of repentance, and to enjoin it immediately. But then, what is the repentance that they enjoin ? Is it such an one as changes the life, and renews the heart ? Such an one as breaks the power and dominion of sin, and works an alteration in all the faculties and inclinations of the soul ?

soul? No; this is too troublesome a task; they have a much shorter way: for, unless they can put off their sins as easily as a man does his cloak, they had rather have them stay on. And therefore, placing the nature of repentance only in sorrow for sin, they distinguish this sorrow into two sorts: The first is contrition, which is a sorrow for sin conceived from the apprehension of its natural filth and contrariety to the pure nature of God. The other is attrition, which is any sorrow or remorse of the mind for sin conceived from the apprehension of the danger and misery like to be consequent upon it.

Now, though they injoin the former, and recommend it, yet not as absolutely necessary to the forgiveness of sins: for they hold, that a man dying with attrition, that is a less sorrow, and commenced upon lower motives than the love of God, if attended with confession to the priest, and absolution from him, shall undoubtedly be saved. An assertion of such high venom and malignity, that it even opens the floodgates to all wickedness, and confirms men in a resolved pursuit of their sin, by securing them a passport to heaven and happiness, upon those easy terms, that it is scarce possible for the vilest of sinners, but they must come up to.

For imagine a man, after threescore years debauchery, laid at length upon his death-bed, without any hope of recovery, and then.

for.

128 S E R M O N VI.

for the priest to ask him whether he is not troubled for his sins, and whether he wishes not, that he had not committed those things, that are like to pay him home with the wages of eternal death; the man, no doubt, under his present weariness of appetite, and decay of body, cannot be so much a stock, and unconcerned for himself, but that he can wish these things undone, of which he tastes no present pleasure, and for which he fears a future vengeance. Now if this, joined with their customary confession, shall be accounted by the priest, a sufficient ground upon which to absolve him, and, upon his absolution, to warrant his salvation, I cannot see but that, upon this way of procedure, it is more difficult for a man to be damned than to be saved. For this whole act of attrition is not properly the sinner's being troubled that he has sinned, but that he is like to be damned for his sin; which, for a man not to be troubled at, that carries human nature and sense about him, is impossible.

This therefore is short of that, which is itself short of repentance; that is, it is short of real sorrow for sin: and sorrow for sin (whatsoever some may imagine) is not repentance. It is indeed a part, or rather an adjunct of it, there being no true repentance without sorrow. But repentance is properly a man's engaging in a new course of life; not a weeping for sins past, but a vigorous resistance and mortification of sin for the future.

ture. The contrary opinion has undoubtedly deceived many, and betrayed them into that place, where they are repenting too late of the errors of their former repentance. Let no man account himself to have repented, who has not changed his life. And, as the apostle says of circumcision and uncircumcision, so say I here, that neither mourning for sin, or confession of it, avail any thing but a *new creature*. And truly, he that will hope for life upon other terms, must do it by a new gospel.

And thus I have traversed those pestilential doctrines, that, like worms, lie gnawing at the root of all godliness; doctrines, that only purvey for licentiousness. And I dare avouch, that, if these carry in them the true sense of Christian religion, a man may, with full and perfect compliance with the rules of Christianity, make as plentiful a provision for the gratification of his corrupt desires, as if he were a mere atheist or epicure. And therefore, I wonder not that many pass from our church to the church of Rome; for being sick in conscience, and yet impatient to undergo the rigours of a thorough cure, they are willing to make up all with a skinning plaister, and to relieve their minds upon as easy terms as they can. And of this they cannot fail in the church of Rome, which has contrived her doctrine to a perfect agreement with all interests and dispositions: so

K

that,

that, to frame and bend all discourses of divinity to the humours and corruptions of men, is with them religion, as with us it is, for the most part, accounted prudence.

I have now finished the third and last conclusion drawn from the words; namely, That whatsoever does in itself, or its direct consequences, undermine the motives of a good life, is contrary to and destructive of Christian religion.

The improvement of all that has been delivered, shall lie in these two things:

1. To convince us how highly it concerns all, but especially the most knowing, to try the doctrines that they believe, and to let enquiry usher in faith. It is noted of the Bereans, *Acts* xvii. 11. as a sign of a generous and noble spirit, that they would search and sift the nature of the things that were delivered to them; for it is sifting that separates the flour from the bran, the precious from the vile. Error is a thing that does not always discover itself to the first view; it is often fair as well as deceitful; and therefore that understanding that will sell its assent to first appearances is in danger of the snare, and to mistake an imposture for an oracle. An error may look speciously in a principle, which will betray ugliness enough in the consequences. It may be honey in the mouth, and wormwood in the belly; delicious to the
first

S E R M O N VI. 131

first apprehensions, but found destructive upon after enquiry and experiment.

He that embraces and believes a truth, if he does it without trial, owes the rightness of his judgment not to understanding, but chance. But truth is too great a prize to be the reward of laziness. God never made it but for the trophy of a laborious and a searching intellect. No man can rationally build upon an implicit faith, that is, upon another's knowledge, but he that has given his name to that church, which allows a man to be saved by other mens righteousness. We are commanded *to try all things*; and therefore, certainly, that thing that is worth all the rest. In a word, since truth is the way to happiness, and since there is no promise of *finding* but to him that *seeks*; he that will not be at the trouble to *seek out the way*, does not deserve to *attain the end*.

2. As what has been delivered convinces us of the necessity of trying all doctrines; so it suggests also the sure marks by which we may try them.

1. As first negatively; it is not the pleasingness or suitableness of a doctrine to our tempers or interests that can vouch it to be true. Men oftentimes believe things to be so, because they would have them so; and the judgment is strangely induced to yield its assent to any assertion that shall gratify the affections. But my profit or my pleasure are

K 2

very

very incompetent guides of my conscience; very unfit casuists to resolve questions. Truth is a thing that usually carries with it too great a severity to correspond with our pleasures. It lies in the rough paths of duty and difficulty, things wonderfully opposite to the delights of pleasure and sensuality, and made to please not in themselves, but in their effects and consequences. No man thinks a thing too pleasant or too profitable; but many will hereafter find that some things are *too true*.

2. The commonness, and the general or long reception of a doctrine, is not a sufficient argument of the truth of it. This relies upon the former consideration, that the suitableness of any doctrine does not evince it to be true; but it is certain, that doctrines are oftentimes generally received, because they are suitable, and serve an interest; witness most of those that are held in the church of Rome; they were introduced by fraud, and continued by force: for there is something of pleasure or profit in the bottom of almost every one of them.

But falsity does not cease to be falsity, by having the good fortune to be generally believed a truth; any more than a plague ceases to be a plague, by spreading itself over all places. It is indeed the more dangerous and formidable, and so may be more hardly

con-

conquered, but for the very same cause it is to be the more earnestly opposed.

Neither does long continuance sufficiently commend a doctrine; for it is possible, that it may be no more than agedness of error; and no grey hairs can make that venerable. The impostures of Mahomet have lasted now a thousand years; and should they last a thousand more, they would be as false as they were at their first beginning. Age alters the circumstance, but not the nature of things.

3. It is not the godliness or virtue of the preacher, or assertor of any doctrine, that is a sure mark of the truth of it; for godliness makes no man infallible. It is possible, that a man may think a principle true or pious, which, in its consequences, may be false or impious; because he has not force of reason enough to discern all the conclusions into which a proposition may be improved.

It is the infelicity of truth, and the great hindrance both of science and religion, that the greatness or goodness of some persons should imprint the same authority upon their words. And error has never such an advantage to prevail and insinuate, as when it is propagated by a person of reputation for wisdom or piety. It has been observed, that most hereticks have been such; by virtue whereof they have conveyed their poison to the world successfully. And our own schis-

134 S E R M O N VI.

maticks took the same course; for had they not gained such an opinion for sanctity with the rout, they could not have countenanced and christned all those black villanies that were acted in the late rebellion.

But a doctrine is to be tried by its consequences; as a way is to be chosen or shunned, according as the end is to which it leads, It concerns every man to preserve his reason from fallacy and deception; and it makes no alteration of his case, that he was deceived by an authentick hand, any more than it is a comfort to a man dying by an infection that he caught it of a great and honourable person.

But if a doctrine naturally tends to promote the fear of God in mens hearts, to engage them in the prosecution of virtuous courses, to persuade them to be sober, pious, temperate, charitable, and the like; it carries with it the mark and impress of the great eternal truth; and so is no more capable of being a lie, than a lie is capable of being good; or than God, the fountain of truth and goodness, is capable of being contrary to himself.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VII.

PROVERBS XXIX. 5.

*A man that flattereth his neighbour,
spreadeth a net for his feet.*

HE that shall set himself to fight against a custom, will find that the match is not equal; and that by speaking against a generally received practice, he only treads the dry paths of duty, without any reward or recompence, but only to be slighted for his pains. But since neither custom nor credit must authorize a vice so far, as to set it out of the preacher's reach; surely an ill practice may be very safely and discreetly reprehended, while, in the mean time, persons are spared.

That which the text here offers for the subject of this discourse, is flattery; a thing condemned by the mouth of one who could very well judge, as being a king, and therefore experimentally acquainted with the ways and arts of flatterers; a sort of cattle that usually herd in the courts of princes, and the houses of great persons.

K 4

The

136 SERMON VII.

The words of the text are so plain, that they can need no explication, and therefore I shall immediately fall upon the prosecution of the matter contained in them ; which I shall manage under these three general heads :

I. I shall shew what flattery is, and wherein it does consist.

II. I shall shew the grounds and occasions of it on his part that is flattered.

III. I shall shew the ends and designs of it on his part that flatters.

I. And first, for the first of these, what flattery is. It surely must be a very difficult thing to bring it under any certain description, the very nature and property of it being to put on all forms and shapes, according to the exigence of the occasion : As it is reported of a creature called a polypus, that it still assumes the exact colour of that thing to which it cleaves. And therefore he that would paint flattery, must draw a picture of all colours, and frame an universal face, indifferent to any particular aspect whatsoever. But tho' we cannot reach all the varieties of it, we may yet endeavour to give some account of those general ways in which it does exercise and shew itself.

I. The first is the concealing, or dissembling, of the defects or vices of any person. Indeed,

Indeed to publish a man's defects to others is malice, but to declare them to himself is friendship and sincerity ; for it is to awake him out of his sleep when his house is afire, and to tell him that he is under a distemper that may prove mortal, if not prevented by timely applications : But flattery is like that devil mentioned in the gospel, that is both *blind* and *dumb* ; it will pretend not to see faults, and if it does, it will be sure not to reprove them ; a temper of all others the most base, cruel, and unchristian : For it declares a man unconcerned in the misery and calamity of his brother, such an one as will not put himself to the expence of a word, to recover a perishing soul from the mouth of ruin and damnation. It shews him to be void of compassion, the bond of converse and all society.

It is, indeed, in the estimation of the world, accounted a piece of prudence, *to let things go as they will*, without interposing to interrupt or alter their course : And no question but if a man, according to our modern politics, makes himself the sole centre of all his actions, and thinks upon nothing but the improving and securing his private interest ; it is the safest and most prudential course to stand still and say nothing, tho' he sees never so many destroying themselves round about him. But had the world heretofore acted by those principles that pass for prudence now-a-days,

138 S E R M O N VII.

a-days, perhaps it would not have stood so long as it has ; for had no man espoused the cause of the publick, nor thought himself at all obliged, upon the common accounts of humanity, to contribute to the good and advantage of others, men could never have united, or embodied ; or being once embodied, and gather'd into corporations, they must presently again have been scatter'd and dissolv'd ; there being (upon supposition of that temper that we have been discoursing of) no common cement to bind and hold them together.

Now this is the only ground upon which the flatterer's silence can be accounted prudence ; but unless to be base is to be prudent, I suppose it will have another esteem with those who are the most competent judges of such things. It is indeed a pest and a disease, and so to be look'd upon and detested by those minds that have the least tincture of virtue and generosity. It breeds only in narrow, paltry, self-serving, spirits, that lie upon the catch, and make this their whole design, to enjoy the world, and to live to themselves.

But now, as to be silent of mens defects and vices is a piece of flattery, and flattery a degenerate and unworthy thing ; yet that all people may not promiscuously think themselves call'd upon to reprove and declare against whatsoever they see amiss in others, and so mistake that for charity and duty, which is indeed

indeed nothing else but fauciness and impertinence ; it will be convenient to shew,

1. First, who they are that are concerned to speak in this case.

2. The manner how they are to speak.

And first for the persons: I conceive they may be brought under these three sorts:

1. First such as are entrusted with the government of others. All government, makes the actions and behaviour of him that is governed in some sense, the actions and behaviour of him that governs: and consequently a governour is as really obliged to observe and regulate what is done by those that are under him, as what he does himself. And therefore as no man is to flatter himself, so neither is such an one to flatter others. No man is to be abused into a destructive persuasion, that his vices are virtues, and his faults perfections; which without an impartial discovery, will certainly follow, from that opinion that self love begets in every man of his own actions, though never so ugly and irregular. He that says nothing of the miscarriages of a person under his government betrays a trust, and forgets that as every father is a governour, so every governour ought, in some respect, to be a father: and surely no father will suffer a son to *perish*, only for want of telling him, that he is *like to perish*; if he does God will require his blood at his hands, which will be but a sad reckoning, where the relation shall redouble the murder.

2. The

2. The second sort of persons, to whom it belongs to tax and take notice of miscarriages, are those who are entrusted with the guidance and direction of others; such as are persons set apart to the work of the ministry. It may possibly be look'd upon as a piece of presumption to say, yet *they* are to guide or to direct, who of all men are accounted the most ignorant and impertinent; yet such is their unhappiness, that the sins of those that think themselves much wiser, if not reprov'd and testified against by them, will be charged by God upon their score. That preacher that shuts his eyes and his mouth where he sees a bold and a reigning vice, prevaricates with his profession, and deserves to be removed from it by some remarkable judgment from heaven for being too wise to discharge his duty.

He is silent it seems for fear of interrupting a great sinner's repose. The gall'd conscience must not be touch'd for fear the beast should kick and do him a shrewd turn.

And therefore there must not be a word cast out, that may so much as border upon a reprehension, or but hint his sin to his suspicion; for if that takes fire, so as to make him worry and at length ruin the preacher, all the pity he shall find for being faithful so much to his own disadvantage, shall be to be upbraided for want of experience, and for *not knowing men*. However this and a much sharper

sharper calamity cannot take off the obligation that Christ and Christianity has laid upon every preacher of the word. And 'tis to be feared, that God may, sometime or other, silence those, who have in this manner first silenced themselves.

3. The third sort of persons to whom this duty belongs are those that profess friendship. Every man is to challenge this as a debt from his friend, to be told impartially of his faults: and whosoever forbears to do it, fails in the highest office of kindness. For to what purpose does a man take another into that intimacy as to make him in a manner his second conscience, if he will not be bold and impartial, and do the office of conscience, by excusing or accusing, according as he has done well or ill? *Two* things are required in him that shall undertake to reprove another; a confidence *in*, and a kindness *to* the person whom he reproves: both which qualifications are eminently to be found in every real friend. For who should a man confide in, if not in himself? and who should he be kind to, if not to himself? and is it not a saying as true as it is common, That every friend is another self?

But is it possible that that man should truly love me, that leaves me unguarded and unassisted, when the weakness and inadvertency of my own mind would expose me with all my indecencies and imperfections to the observation

142 S E R M O N VII.

vation and derision of the world? no; it is the nature of *love to cover a multitude of sins*; which are by no way so effectual concealed and covered from the eye of others as by being faithfully discovered and laid open to him who commits them.

It puts him upon his defence, and upon all the arts of securing himself, by watching and criticizing upon his own behaviour. It arms him with caution and recollection. And so frees him from the greatest evil in the world; which is confidence in the midst of folly: a quality that destroys wheresoever it abides; that unfits a man for conversation, deprives him of all respect; and, in a word, is the only thing that can make his enemies formidable, and, in all their attempts against him, successful.

And thus I have shewn who the persons are, to whom it belongs to *discover* and to *reprove* faults: But since, though the work is fitted to the person, there may still be a fault in the manner; we shall, in the next place, see how these reprehensions are to be managed: Concerning which I shall set down these rules:

I. First, let the reproof (if possible) be given in secret; for the design of it is not to blazon the crime, but to amend the person. Let it not be before malicious witnesses, such as shall more enjoy the man's shame, than hate his vice. The publication
of

of a miscarriage, instead of reforming the offender, may possibly make him desperate or impudent; either to despond under the burthen of his infamy, or to harden his forehead like a flint, and resolve to out-face and out-brave it; neither of which are like to conduce any thing to the purposes of virtue, or to promote the person's recovery.

Shame indeed is a notable instrument to deter a man from vicious and lewd practices, but then it is not shame as it is actually endured, but as it is yet feared; for the endurance of it puts an end to the fear; and if the man is of a bold and a daring temper, is like to make him ten times more a wretch and a villain than he was before: For now he thinks he has felt the worst of his crime, and so lies under no check, as to its further progress.

But such is partly the malice, partly the unskilfulness of most persons, in their taxing the faults of others, that the man that is most concerned in the report, perhaps comes to hear of it last; it being first communicated to another, and so, thro' many hands, is at length conveyed to him; or peradventure, it is at the very first proclaimed upon the house-top; so that the man, instead of being gradually reduced, is at once blown up and undone, and this is all the charity and discretion of some reprovers.

But

But the method prescribed by Christ is very different. Has thy brother offended thee? first tell him his *fault between him and thee*; and if that prevail not, then take unto thee a *witness*; but if neither this will do any thing, *then tell it him before two or three witnesses*: And at last, upon contempt of all these, then *bring it to the church*. All which excellent proceeding consists of so many steps of prudence and humanity; of tenderness to our brother's reputation, as well as to his soul; and of his comforts in this world, as well as of his salvation in the next: A course worthy the imitation of all, but especially those who are to study the great wisdom of winning souls.

The vices of most natures have in them this property of the dirt, that the sight of the sun hardens, but never dissolves them. When the crime is made publick, the criminal thinks it not worth while to retreat: His ignominy is now in the mouths and memory of all men, and so not to be cancell'd, or brought into oblivion by any after practices of virtue, or regularity of living.

The end of every reproof is remedy; but to shame a man is revenge; and such an one as the bitterest adversary in the world cannot act a sharper, or a more remorseless: And therefore the church of Rome, which practices and requires confession of sins to the priest, thinks no penalty too severe to be inflicted

S E R M O N VII. 145

inflicted upon that confessor that should disclose any thing revealed to him in confession. A practice most wise and charitable; and though used by them perhaps upon grounds of policy, yet to be enforced in the like instances, upon the highest accounts of religion.

For it is a piece of inhuman barbarity, to afflict a man but in order to his consequent good; and I have shewn, that the publication of a man's shame, that might otherwise be conceal'd, can contribute nothing to the making of him better. It may sink his spirit, or exasperate his vice; but any other effect upon him, it can have none. A sore is never to be ripped up, but in order to its cure.

2. Let a reproof be managed with due respect to, and distinction of the condition of the person that is to be reprov'd. He that at any time comes under the unhappy necessity of reprehending his superior, ought so to behave himself, that he may appear to acknowledge him his superior no less in the reproof, than in the most solemn acts of reverence and submission; for religion teaches no man to be rude or uncivil, nor takes away the difference of persons, and the inequality of states and conditions; but commands a proportion of respect suitable to all: And he that reprov's a prince, or a great person, in the same manner that he would a

* L peasant,

146 S E R M O N VII.

peasant, or his equal and companion, shews that he is acted rather by the spirit of a Scotch presbytery, than of Christ. But such perhaps will defend themselves with the example of the prophet Elijah reviling Ahab and Jezebel, and so baptizing the intemperance of their tongues with the name of zeal, bear themselves for persons of an heroic spirit, comparable to the old prophets. But persons that pretend this, ought to satisfy the world, that they act by the same extraordinary commission from heaven that Elijah did, and withal to do the miracles that Elijah did, for the proving of that commission; otherwise it will not be sufficient for them, that they shew wonders of incivility and ill behaviour.

All persons called to the ministry, are undoubtedly commissioned by Christ to bear witness to the truth, by testifying against the enormities of the greatest, as well as of the meanest sinners; but no man's particular personal indiscretion, is any part of his commission. It is possible, indeed, that it *may*, nay, very certain that it *will* make the execution of it very useless and ineffectual to most of the great purposes to which Christ designed it; for truth unseasonably and unmannerly proposed, comes with a disadvantage, and is in danger to miscarry thro' the unskilfulness of the proposer; and, as we say of some commentators and interpreters of

S E R M O N VII. 147

of scripture, that the text had been clearer, had they not expounded, or indeed, rather exposed it; so it is like that some persons had not been so vicious and lewd, to the degree of incorrigible, had not their vice and lewdness been indiscreetly reprov'd; for that has made them bid defiance to virtue, and turn their backs upon the reproof; imputing (by an unjust indeed, but yet by an usual inference) the faults of the person upon the office and the religion; in which case the reprover shall, before God, share the offender's guilt; for that finding him sinful, he made him obstinate and impenitent; and so confirmed the beginnings of sin into a resolved settled impiety.

I question not, but it had been very lawful for Abraham to have reprov'd his father's idolatry, and to have declared and represented the unreasonableness of such a worship to him. But yet while he was doing so, I cannot believe that he was in the least discharged from the eternal obligation of the law of nature, exacting a due honour to be paid to parents: For a true doctrine could never have excus'd an undutiful behaviour.

With what humility, reverence, and distance did Daniel reprove Belshazzar? Though a most impious insulting heathen, and one that had but newly, in a drunken revel, even

148 S E R M O N VII.

spit in the face of the God of heaven, by a profanation of the sacred vessels of the temple amongst his unhallowed parasites and concubines; yet he did not fly in his face, or call him profane or sacrilegious prince, and tell him that divine vengeance would pay him home for his insolence and unthankfulness to God. No; Daniel did not speak as some, that now-a-days pretend to interpret, utter themselves to princes. But after he had recounted the signal mercies and judgments of God upon his father Nebuchadnezzar, all the reproof he gives him runs in these gentle and sober words, ch. v. 22. *And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this.* For undoubtedly, had he been sharp and peremptory, Belshazzar, a prince of that haughty and arrogant spirit, would never have sent him out of his presence cloathed with scarlet, and with a gold chain about his neck. No; it is like he had been loaded with another kind of chain, and, perhaps, worn a scarlet dyed with his own blood. But prudence and submission made his reproof acceptable, and his person honourable.

Great ones, whose state and power makes their will absolute and formidable, must, for the most part, be pleased before they can be convinced; and therefore must be brought
to

to *love* before they will *obey* the truth. Upon which account it is infinitely vain to cast the issue and success of persuasion upon the sole force of truth or virtue addressing itself to the mind, with all its severities bare and unqualified, by a winning behaviour in him that is to persuade. He that presumes upon the mere efficacy of truth, forgets that men have affections to be caressed, as well as understandings to be informed; which is the reason, that a reprehension can never be grateful to persons of high place, but as it comes disguised with ceremony, and attended with all the expressions and demonstrations of honour and due respect; all which will be found little enough to keep them from thinking themselves affronted, while they are only faithfully admonished; and from throwing back an unpleasing truth in the teeth of him that brings it.

What mens pride and ill-nature may carry them to, is not in the preacher's power to remedy or prevent; only it concerns him, that the reproof which mens sins have made necessary, should not, by any failure of duty on his part, be made ineffectual. God has not made it a virtue in any man to have no respect of persons: And therefore let him that shall call upon princes and Cæsars to give God his due, beware that he do it with that homage as not to bereave Cæsar of his due;

remembering, that if he that reproves is God's ambassador, yet he that is reprov'd is God's vicegerent; and that there is nothing in the world that more highly deserves reproof, than a pragmatICAL and absurd re-prover.

3. Let him that reproves a vice, as much as is possible, do it with words of meekness and commiseration. Let the reprehension come not as a dart shot at the offender's person, but at his crime. Let a man reprehend so, that it may appear that he wishes, that he had no cause to reprehend. Let him behave himself in the sentence that he passes, as we may imagine a judge would behave himself, if he were to condemn his own son, brought as a criminal before him; that is, with the greatest reluctance and trouble of mind imaginable, that he should be brought under the necessity of such a cruel accident, as to be forced to speak words of death to him, whose life he tends more passionately than his own,

Now this being the temper and disposition that is required in a reprov'er, it easily appears, that nothing can be more deformed and uncharitable than scoffs and bitter sarcasms thrown at a poor guilty person; than to insult over his calamity, and to seem, as it were, to taste and relish his distress. A jeering reprov'er is like a jeering judge, than which there cannot be imagined, either in
nature

nature or manners, a thing more odious and intolerable. And therefore the Roman orator, discoursing of scoptical urbanity, or jesting, how far it was allowable in speeches and pleadings, lays down an excellent rule, fit to be owned by the most Christian charity, that two things were by no means to be made the subject of jest; namely, great crimes, and great miseries; for if these be made the matter of our mirth, what can be the argument of our sorrow? There is something in them, at which nature shrinks and is aggrieved; so that it beholds them with horror and uneasiness: and nothing but a very ill mind, improved by a very ill custom, can frame itself to pleasant apprehensions upon such occasions; for that any man should be merry, because another has offended God, or undone himself, is certainly a thing very unnatural.

But then further; as reproofs are not to be managed with bitter and scurrilous reflexions upon the offender, so neither is the offence itself to be aggravated by higher and blacker expressions, than the nature of the thing, or the necessity of the occasion requires. He that is to reprove, is to remember, that his business is not to declaim and shew his parts, but to work a cure. And some actions are so confessedly lewd, that but to hint them to the offender, is sufficient to cover

152 S E R M O N VII.

him with shame and sad remembrances, without a morose and particular insisting upon the description of their vileness; which being to tell the guilty person no more than what he knew before, cannot properly serve to inform, but only to upbraid and afflict him; which is none of the works of charity, as every reprehension ought to be.

David was not to be informed of the enormity of the sins of murder and adultery, and to have long harangues made before him, to aggravate and set forth their filthiness; and therefore, when the prophet Nathan was to bring him a reproof from heaven, and to call him to repentance, we see with what insinuations and arts of gentleness he does it; he represents the injustice and unreasonableness of what he had done in a parallel case, leaving him to make the application; by which, having brought him to the confession of his sin, he does not presently fill his ears with tragical exclamations about the impiety and grossness of it, both in respect of the person that committed it, and the persons upon whom it was committed; a work fitter for a schoolmaster than a prophet; but he answers his confession with a declaration of pardon, seconded only with a gentle item, or admonition; *The Lord has done away thy sin; thou shalt not die: Howbeit, by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of*

S E R M O N VII. 153

of the Lord to blaspheme. Nothing could have been spoke more gently, and yet more forcibly, to melt him down into a penitential sorrow for, and an abhorrence of those two foul deviations from the law of God. But there is a sort of men in the world, pretending to a degree of purity and acquaintance with the mind of God above other mortals, that upon such an opportunity would have called up all their spleen and poison, and have reviled him at least two hours by the clock; and could no more have refrained doing so, than they could have held their breath so long.

Before I pass from this rule of managing reproofs with words of meekness, candour, and compassion; I cannot but think this also necessary to be added, that they are to be managed without superciliousness, and a certain spiritual arrogance, by which the reprover looks upon the guilty person with disdain, in comparison of that higher measure of holiness and perfection, that upon this account he presumes to be in himself. But this is for pride to reprehend other vices, which perhaps, in the sight of God, carry a much less guilt.

He that has a criminal and a vicious person under his reproof, should speak as one that thankfully ascribes it to God's mere grace, that he is not as bad himself, having the
same

154 S E R M O N VII.

same nature, and the same natural corruptions, to betray him to all the evil and villany that can be, if God should but desert and leave him to his own strength. By this means he treats the offender as his equal, his brother, and naturally standing upon the same ground, the vantage being entirely from divine favour; of which a man may have cause to be glad indeed, but no cause to boast.

For let that proud Pharisee that shall reprove a Publican with words of insultation and boasting, *that he is not such an one as he*, tell me how he knows, that had he been placed under the same circumstances and opportunities of sin, he should not have been prevailed upon to do the same for which, with so much arrogance, he reproves or rather baits another. Was it not the mercy of Providence, that cast the scene of his life out of the way of temptation? that placed the flax and the stubble out of the reach of the fire? And what cause has he then to be bitter and insolent upon him that God thought fit to deny these advantages to, though otherwise of no worse mould or make, or less merit than himself?

But this is not to be passed by, that as God most peculiarly and directly hates such an arrogant disposition, as is apt to crow and insult over the failings and lapses of others;

fo

so it is ten to one but that, some time or other, he lets loose some fierce temptation upon such an one, and leaves him so far to himself, that he falls foully and scandalously, to the perpetual abasement of his pride, and the infamy of his person; in which case, all the daggers that he threw at others, are, with greater force and sharpness, returned upon his own breast, where formerly there dwelt so little compassion to his offending brother.

And therefore, surely, I should think it concerned every one about to reprove any vicious persons whatsoever, first to allay his spirit, and to compose himself to mildness and moderation, with that excellent admonition of the apostle, *Gal. vi. 1. If a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* And believe it, it will be but an uncomfortable revolution, when he that once bore himself high upon his innocence, and then shew'd no mercy upon others, shall come to have the same need of mercy himself.

4. The fourth and last rule that I shall mention for the compleating of our direction about this duty, is, that a reproof be not continued or repeated, after amendment of that which occasioned the reproof. For this is both malicious and useless; malicious, because

156 S E R M O N VII.

cause it renews a man's torment, and revives his calamity ; and then useless, because the man is already reformed.

Pardon is still to be accompanied with oblivion ; not that it is in our power to forget a thing when we will ; but it is in our power to behave ourselves as if we had forgot it ; with that friendliness of address, that unconcernment of speech, that openness and respect of carriage that we use to persons that never did those actions which others have only left off to do.

But to be still sarcastically reminding of a penitent amended person of his former mis-carriages, which perhaps stand cancelled in heaven, and even blotted out of the book of God's remembrance ; it is like the breaking open of graves, to rake out bones and putrefaction, and argues not only an unchristian, but an inhuman wolfish disposition.

Let this suffice to render every such person inexcusable to himself, that he would not indure to wish that either God or man should deal so by him ; and if so, there can be no such true and infallible demonstration of his baseness, as the impartial measure of this rule.

And thus much for the first thing, wherein flattery does consist ; namely, the concealing, and not reproving the defects and faults of obnoxious persons ; which, understood with those

S E R M O N VII. 157

those due limitations hitherto laid down, will be able to keep him, whose place or condition may at any time call him to this work, both from a sordid undutiful silence on one hand, and from a sawcy, meddling, bitter impertinence on the other.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VIII.

PROVERBS XXIX. 5.

*A man that flattereth his neighbour,
spreadeth a net for his feet.*

II. **T**HE second general head proposed for the prosecution of these words, was to shew what were the grounds and occasions of flattery, on his *part that is flattered* : I shall mention three :

I. Greatness of place or condition. There is nothing that secures a man from flattery more than the confident and free access of ingenuous persons. But confidence and freedom are seldom found, but where there is a parity of conditions : Reproof being of the nature of those things that seldom ascend and move upwards ; but it either passes to an equal, or descends upon an inferior. He that is great and potent casts an awe and a terror round about him, and (as it were) shuts and barricadoes himself in from all approaches, like mount Sinai, where the fire burning, and the

the voice thundering, would suffer none to come near it ; so that such an one is still treated with silence and distance ; his faults are whispered behind his back ; he is scoffed at in little rooms and merry meetings, and and never hears the severe healing truths that are spoke of him ; but lives muffled and blindfold, unacquainted with himself, and the judgments of men concerning him.

Upon which account great persons, unless their understandings are very great too, and withal unprejudiced with self-love, so as to be their own monitors, and impartial exactors of themselves, are of all others the most miserable. For though a reproof might open their eyes, and correct their behaviour ; and though there are not wanting those that are concerned for their good ; yet they fright away all these remedies, and live and die strangers to their cure.

For in this case men consider, first, the great danger of speaking freely to great persons what they are not willing to hear : It may enrage, and make them their mortal enemies. It may render them as great in malice as they are in power and condition. It is at best a very bold venture, and greatness is not so tractable a thing, as to lay itself quietly open to the reprehender and the faithful admonisher, who speak for the man's advantage more than for his pleasure, and bring him
physick

160 S E R M O N VIII.

physick instead of sweetmeats. The experience men have in the world, usually makes them fearful to engage in unpleasing offices. Especially when they consider farther, how easy it is to be safe and silent ; and how little it concerns them to court a trouble, a danger, and a potent displeasure, by endeavouring to do a man good against his will. They think it a great folly to put themselves upon an harsh, and the same also a thankless employment ; to lose an interest, and a great friend, only for doing that which they could with much more ease have let alone.

Men see also how ill it has fared with such as have presumed to be free with the grandees of the world, in point of reproof and animadversion : They have been rewarded with frowns, sharpness and disdain, and sent away with dejected countenances ; as if the reprovers themselves had been the persons in fault. Majesty and power usually think virtue and happiness itself bought at too dear a rate, if it be at the price of an admonition.

For all which causes, persons of evil or low minds, which make up much the greater part of the world, are willing to follow their game, and to cajole and flatter a vicious greatness, since it turns so much to their profit and reputation ; while the great one, that is abused according to his own heart's desire, bids the flatterer sit at his right hand ; in the
mean

mean time making his impartial friend and reprover his footstool, slighting him for his upright dealing, and sending him to his own virtue for a reward.

2. The second ground of flattery, on his part that is flattered, is an angry, passionate disposition, and impatient of reproof. This also frights and deters men from doing the office of friends, in a faithful reprehension. For some minds are more raging and tumultuous than the sea itself, so that if Christ himself should rebuke them, instead of being calm, they would rage and roar so much the louder. That admonition that would reclaim others, does but chafe and provoke them ; as the same breath of wind that cools some things, kindles and inflames others. No sooner do some hear their behaviour taxed, tho' with the greatest tenderness and moderation, but their choler begins to boil, and their breast is scarce able to contain and keep it from running over into the heights and furies of bitterness and impatience. The man, instead of correcting his fault, will redouble it with a greater ; add fierceness to his folly, affronting and reviling him that would unbesot and reform him.

Now it requires a person not only of friendship and fidelity, but also of courage and valour, to undertake to be a reprover here ; forasmuch as to reprove such an one, is, in
 * M effect,

effect, to give him battle: He must be able to bear, and, what is more, to slight and tame his rage; he must not sneak and fly back at every great word, nor suffer himself to be talk'd and vapour'd out of countenance.

But few people are able, and fewer willing, to put themselves to so great an inconvenience for another's good, and to raise a storm about their own ears, to do an odious ungrateful piece of service for an ungrateful person; and therefore men usually deal with such currish sharp natures as they do with mastiffs, they are fain to stroak them, tho' they deserve to be cudgelled. They flatter and commend them to keep them quiet, and to compose the unruly humour which is ready to grow and improve upon the least check or opposition.

From the consideration of which we easily see the great misery and disadvantage of passionate angry persons; their passion does not only bereave them of their own eyes, but also of the benefit of other men's; which he that is of a gentle and a tractable nature enjoys in the midst of all his errors: For his friend sees, and judges, and chooses for him, when the present precipitation of his mind hurries him besides the steady use of his reason. He is reduced by counsel, rectified and recalled by one that sees his fault, and dares tell him of it; so that the cure is almost as early as the distemper.

We

S E R M O N V I I I. 163

We may observe of brambles, that they always grow crooked, for by reason of their briars and thorns no hand can touch them, so as to bend them strait. And so it is with some dispositions ; they grow into a confirmed settled obliquity, because their sharpness makes them unfit to be handled by discipline and admonition. They are a terror and a grievance to those that they converse with ; and to attempt to advise them out of their irregularities, is as if a chirurgeon should offer to dress a wounded lion ; he must look to perish in the address, and to be torn in pieces for his pains.

It was surely of very great importance to Nabal, mentioned in 1 *Sam.* xxv. to have been admonished of the rough unadvised answer that he returned to David's soldiers ; for it was like to have brought a ruin upon him and his family, and his whole estate ; yet none would do him that seasonable kindness, because of the rudeness and churlishness of his manners : For in the 17th verse that character is given of him, that he *was such a son of Belial, that a man could not speak to him.*

Many would be willing to recover a person from his follies, but they are not willing to be snapt and rail'd at for so doing ; they would be ready enough to pluck a brand out of the fire, might they do it without burning their fingers. But to be foolish and to be an-

gry too, is for a man first to cast himself into a pit, and then to hinder others from pulling him out.

3. The third and last ground of flattery, on his part that is flatter'd, is a proud and vain-glorious disposition. To tell a proud person of his faults, is to tell infallibility that it is in an error, and to spy out something amiss in perfection. Such an one looks upon himself as above all defects, and privileged from doing any thing mean, low, or obnoxious. There is no quality that more estranges a man from the free addresses of his friends, and their hearty communications of their thoughts concerning him, than an high conceit and opinion of himself: For this makes him rate all other men's judgments by his own measures, and set that price upon himself and his actions, that he thinks all the world must come up to: And therefore he that taxes or reprehends him, must expect the same credit and success that he is like to find, that should accuse an only son to his fond mother: He would quickly experiment, that love is wonderfully blind, but especially about those things that it has no mind to see.

A proud person who with the worst kind of idolatry adores himself, and what is more the worst part of himself, his defects and vices, thinks that his doing of any action is sufficient to stamp it decent and virtuous.

As

SERMON VIII. 165

As it is reported of Cato being drunk, that one should say of him, by reason of his reputation so much too great for any slander, that it would be easier to prove that drunkenness was no vice, than that Cato could be vicious; so some people, tho' they spoil every thing by an undue management of it, lose opportunities, and overlook occasions; yet they must be thought to be still carrying on designs of policy, to err and mistake prudentially: The world must perswade itself out of its own experience, and believe surmises tho' contradicted by effects. It must be willing to be sunk by the hands of such skilful pilots, and judge the foolishness of some to be wiser than the wisdom of others.

Now those that would have the world maintain such an opinion of them, are the fairest and the broadest mark for the flatterer to shoot at that can be, the fittest persons to be made buffoons of: For do but commend and praise them to their face, and you may pick their pockets, cut their throats, and cheat them of their estates. Nor need the flatterer fear that they will look thro' his design, and so discover and loath all his feigned encomiums; for let them be never so gross and palpable, let him lay it on never so thick, yet pride and conceitedness will swallow all, and look upon itself obliged too, for being so kindly abused.

M 3

And

166 S E R M O N VIII.

And it has been sometimes seen, that a man, while he has been flattering and extolling an opinionative fool (who has with much pleasure heard and embraced him, for the glorious things he so liberally spoke of him) he has now and then turned his head aside, and flouted and laugh'd at him to his companions, for suffering himself to be held by the nose by such pitiful arts, so easily discerned and detested by any person of discretion.

Upon an easy observation we shall find, that there is nothing that renders a man more ridiculous, in most of the passages of his life, than much credulity ; there is nothing that more certainly makes him a prey to the deceiver and the cheat : But now this is the inseparable property of pride and self-estimation. Every such person carries a belief about him so strong and so great, that it is impossible to overwork it : He will turn every romance into a real history, and even believe contradictions in his own behalf.

Which being so, if a man be great and potent as well as proud, it is no wonder if he is always plied with flatterers, and if they resort to him as the crows do to a carcase, always fluttering and chattering about him ; for alas he thinks they are only doing him right, and admiring him for that which he himself admires much more. Pride makes him lift his

his eyes upward, which is the reason that he never turns them inward ; and so being unknown to himself, he must believe the deceiver upon his own word.

Now the deduction that I shall make from all this, is, that of the many arguments and signs of real friendship, none is so sure and infallible, as a readiness to reprehend impartially and seasonably whatsoever needs reprehension. For it is clear, that he that does so, prefers the good of him whom he reprehends before his own interest. He knows not but his proud and impatient humour may make him disgust and persecute him, for giving him so free and true a view of himself; but yet he ventures all to redeem him from shame and disorder: In a word, he resolves to do the part of a friend, though his very doing so makes him forfeit his being thought so. He that carries on no design for his own advantage in what he does, gives an unfailing demonstration of his sincerity ; and he that tells a man what he knows, will find but a small acceptance with him (as the story of his faults is like to do) hazards his friend's favour, and with that his own emolument ; and really makes himself, and his hopes, a sacrifice to the other's reputation.

Having thus finished the second general head, and shewn the grounds and occasions

M 4

of

168 S E R M O N VIII.

of flattery on his part that is flattered ; I proceed now to the

III^d, and last, which is to shew the ends and designs of it on his part that flatters: And those are briefly comprised in these words of the text, *He spreads a net for his neighbour's feet.*

It is a metaphor borrowed from the practice of hunters or fowlers: And now, as there is no man that spreads a net, but does it with this double intention ; first, to catch and destroy the thing for which he spreads it ; and then, by so doing, to advantage himself ; as either in his pleasure or his profit : so accordingly, every flatterer, in all his fawnings and dissimulations, is acted and influenced by these two grand purposes :

1. To serve himself.

2. To undermine him whom he flatters, and thereby to effect his ruin.

1. And first, he designs to benefit and serve himself. In all that artificial scene that he lays, by adoring and commending this or that great person, he intends not so much to *praise* as to *be* what the other is. He would be great, rich, and honourable ; and that puts him upon the dissembler's drudgery to enslave himself to all his humours ; to extol his impertinences, and adore his very villainies,

S E R M O N VIII. 169

lanies. It is not for want of wit or apprehension that the flatterer speaks such paradoxes; for he sees through that great and glorious bauble that he so cringes to; he despises him heartily, while he harangues him magnificently; his thoughts and his words are at a perpetual jar and distance; he thinks satyres, while he speaks panegyricks.

Nay, and perhaps he hates and abhors his own ill fate too, that should force him to take such a fordid course to advance himself; that should make him fall down before such an image, and worship such an illustrious piece of emptiness. But profit reconciles evil minds to the coarsest and lowest services; and men are willing to bow their bodies, and stoop down to take up a jewel, or a piece of gold, though it be from a dunghill.

But it is evident, that every flatterer designs only his own advantage, whether there be or be not any real foundation of worth in him whom he pretends to admire; and that from this one consideration, that the same person, in case he falls from his greatness and power, is presently deserted, and finds all his parasite's encomiums turned into scoffs and invectives. The man's virtue, if he had any, remains untouched, and perhaps by his calamity improved. He can be as valiant, as just and temperate, as he was before;

170 S E R M O N VIII.

fore ; but what is that to the purpose ? He cannot reward or prefer ; he cannot frown an enemy into ruin, or smile a friend, or a dependant, into a fair fortune. And if so, the flatterer thinks he should but lose his time and his breath to declaim, and be eloquent, upon so dry a subject. No ; his game lies another way ; he bids *good-night* to the *setting*, and reserves his devotion for the *rising* sun. Men may be both wise and virtuous ; but it is their power that makes them commended for being so.

And from this it is also, that we may observe in flatterers such great difference in the behaviour of the same person at one time, from what it is at another. While he is yet upon the chace, and a getting, none so humble, so abject, so full of all servile compliances ; but when his nest is feathered, and his bags full, he can be insolent and haughty, he can bend his knee as stiffly, and keep his distance as magisterially as another. For, like Saul, after he comes to a crown and a kingdom, he then presently finds in himself another spirit, and disdains to look after those asses, that he used formerly so much to follow. Let his old rich patrons now commend themselves ; he has served his turn of them, caught the fish, and he cares for no more. After the young one is grown up, and well thriven, it follows the dam no longer ;

longer ; but instead of following it, if occasion serves, it can kick it. No man uses flattery as his employment, but as his instrument ; and, consequently, when it has done his work, he lays it aside. And thus much for the flatterer's first design, which is to serve and advantage himself.

2. His second is to undermine and ruin him whom he flatters. He finds his interest and affairs cast so, that he is not like to be considerable, without the downfall of such or such a person ; who yet is so great and powerful, that he despairs to shake him by violence and direct force ; and therefore he endeavours to circumvent him by art ; to which purpose, he pretends himself an admirer of his extraordinary parts and virtues, tickles his ears with perpetual applauses of all his words and actions ; and by this means he gets the esteem of a friend, and with that an opportunity of working under ground. But all this while he is big with a design of mischief ; he is only taking aim where he may shoot him surely and mortally : so that all the fair speeches and fine flowers that he strews in the other's way, are only to cover and conceal the fatal gin and trap that he has placed, to catch and bring him into the hands of the destroyer. And it is very frequent, that the flatterer, by taking this course, makes his design effectual, and compasses the
ruin

172 S E R M O N V I I I .

ruin of him whom he flatters ; and that upon these several accounts :

I. First, by this means he deceives him, and grossly abuses and perverts his judgment, which should be the guide and director of all his actions. A right judgment is to the soul, what a strong and an healthful constitution is to the body ; it will, by its own force, work off all lesser inconveniences and distempers. Though a man be sometimes driven aside by his passions and his irregular appetites ; yet so long as his mind and understanding has an habitually true notion and apprehension of things, it will recover the man, and prevent the error from being infinite. And therefore, according to that advice given to the soldier, *τὴν κεφαλὴν πεφύλαξο*, *secure your head* ; so is every one to be careful to preserve his judging faculties entire, that he may not be abused into false choices, and imposed upon by undue and fallacious conclusions : for a flaw in these leaves the soul like an army without conduct, exposed to all the miseries of dispersion and confusion.

He that is thoroughly deceived, is in the very next disposition to be ruined ; for cast but a mist before a man's eyes, and whither may you not lead him ? He marches on with as much confidence into a slough, or a pitfall, as he would tread the direct paths that lead to his own house. None plays the fool confidently, but he that verily believes
he

he does wisely. He is flattered into mistakes and false measures of his actions, and views all the passages of his behaviour by a false light, the consequences of which must needs be destructive and miserable.

And therefore, every flatterer who endeavours to delude and blind the judgment of a man, properly gives him a fatal wound in the head; and if that be crazed and giddy, it is not the absolute entire perfection of all the other parts of the body, that can suffice to regulate and direct so much as any one action of life. The whole tenour of a man's behaviour in this case, is like the motion of a watch, that has a fault in the spring; he is rendred utterly useless, as to all great and considerable purposes.

2. The flatterer undermines, and perhaps, in the issue, ruins him whom he flatters, by bringing him to shame, and a general contempt; for he deals with him like one that pins some ridiculous thing upon another's back, and then sends him with it into the market-place, where he finds himself hooted and laughed at by all; but walks on, wholly ignorant of the cause. The flatterer tells an impertinent talking grandee, that his discourse wonderfully becomes him; that he utters himself with extraordinary grace and exactness of speech; he accordingly believes him, and gives his tongue no rest, but is still proclaiming his emptiness and indiscretion in all companies. He tells another passionate

174 S E R M O N VIII.

sionate furioso, that it argues height and gallantry of spirit, not to endure the least undervaluing word, the least shadow of an affront, and he accordingly, upon every trivial occasion, takes fire, and flames out into all the expressions of rage and revenge; and, for his pains, is despised by some, hated by others, and opposed by all; and these are the effects and favours of flattery.

In a word; the flatterer deals with the flattered person, as the Philistines did with Sampson, first putting out his eyes, and then making him a mock and a sport, to all that had a mind to divert themselves with his calamity. Shame, of itself, is indeed a great misery; but then we are to consider farther, that as to the real advantages of the world, it is to be reckoned amongst the surest and speediest causes of a man's ruin. For who will employ, who will prefer or recommend a despised person? Kindness and contempt seldom lodge upon the same object. But suppose that a man had a kindness for such an one, yet he would not be able to own the effects of such a kindness, against the general envy and derision and censures of the world; bad certificates to vouch a man's fitness for any place or preferment.

Shame and contempt casts a man under the feet of those whom he converses with; in which case, we cannot presume upon any such redundancy of compassion and good nature amongst men, as to imagine that any

one can be under foot, without being trampled upon. He that flights me himself cannot possibly be my friend, but he that endeavours to make others flight me too, must needs be my mortal enemy.

3. The flatterer undermines, and effects the ruin of him whom he flatters; forasmuch as by this means he renders his recovery and amendment impossible. Every fault in a man shuts the door upon virtue, but flattery is the thing that seals it. Solomon gives his judgment in the case fully and unanswerably, *Prov. xxvi. 12. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of that man.* A man's way out of error, lies thro' the paths of conviction; and he that recovers a fool must first unfool him to that degree, as to perswade him of his folly: For it is a thing against nature and reason for a man to think of amendment, who at the same time thinks himself perfect. No man surely prepares himself for travel, while he supposes himself at his journey's end.

He that makes another sick, and brings him under a distemper, does not presently destroy him, because there is still a remedy in physick; but he that persuades a sick distemper'd person that he is well, and so keeps him from the use of physick, he certainly is preparing a coffin for him, and designs nothing but to bring him to his grave.

Every flatterer, by infusing into a man a good opinion of his defects and vices, endeavours

vours to fasten and rivet them into his behaviour for ever ; for no man leaves what he cannot dislike. Persuade a prisoner, or a captive, that his prison is a paradise, and you shall never hear him petition for a release. Vice indeed captivates and enslaves wheresoever it prevails, but flattery strives to make the mind in love with its slavery, and so to render that slavery perpetual and unalterable ; it would fain intoxicate and charm a man into a kind of stupidity and impotence to help himself. In short, it uses him as Jael did Sisera, it pretends to refresh and entertain him kindly, but it designs only to nail his head to the ground.

And thus I have endeavoured to lay open the flatterer's ends and purposes. Where, upon the result of all, it is perhaps a disputable case, whether of the two is a worse thing, *to flatter*, or *to be flattered*? to be so sordid, and withal mischievous, as to practice the one, or so blind and sottishly easy as to suffer the other. But the truth is, this latter is the object of pity, as the former is of the justest hatred and detestation. In fine, it must be the harmlessness of the dove that must keep a man from doing one, and the wisdom of the serpent that must preserve him from being abused by the other ; neither of which virtues can be had in any perfection, but from the grace and bounty of him who is the author and giver of every good and perfect gift.

S E R-

S E R M O N IX.

PROVERBS XXIX. 5.

*A man that flattereth his neighbour,
spreadeth a net for his feet.*

II. **T**HE second thing wherein flattery consists, is the praising and defending the defects or vices of any person. This is a step much higher than the first, which was (as we may so call it) the negative part of flattery, as consisting only in silence, and a not reproving those things that both deserved and needed reproof. And as it goes higher, so it is much more inexcusable, and incapable of those apologies that may be alledged, though not in justification, yet at least in mitigation of the former. For partly the timorousness, partly the bashfulness of some tempers (affections not always at our command) may silence the tongue and seal up the lips, from uttering those things which the mind and judgment frequently suggests upon these occasions. A man may be sometimes even dazled

* N

and

and astonished into silence by the presence of some glistering sinners; so as to be at a loss both for words and confidence to vent those reproofs, that fill the conscience, and are even struggling to break forth. Certain it is, that this, or any other consideration, can by no means warrant a silence there, where religion bids a man cry aloud; nor can any one plead his modesty in prejudice of his duty: yet surely there is something at least pleadable upon this account; for the bare not-reproof of a sin, that can with no face be urged for its defence.

For pusillanimity must first pass into a prostitute impudence, before a man can arrive to that pitch as to vouch himself the encomiast of sin, and to speak panegyrics upon vice: many a man may favour a malefactor, and wish his crime concealed or passed over, who yet would never endure to be his advocate. It is one thing for a man to shut his eyes, and so resolve not to see that which is black; another, for him with an open eye and a shameless front, to affirm black to be white; and to undertake to persuade the world so much.

But so does he, that attempts the commendation of any thing lewd or vicious: he transforms the devil into an angel of light: he confounds the distinction of those things that God has set at an infinite distance: he outfaces the common judgment of sense and
reason,

reason, and the natural unforced apprehensions of mankind.

And though one would think that there is that commanding majesty in truth as even to awe men into an acknowledgment of things to be, as really they are, and generally do appear; and withal that ingenuity bred in every breast, as not to own any broad defiance of the clearest evidence: Yet experience shews, that there is a sort of men in the world, that have wrought themselves to that hardiness, as to venture to tell one that has done passionately and rashly, that he did couragiously and discreetly; that shall applaud him in all his follies; assuring him that if men speak amiss of his behaviour, it is rather upon the account of envy and malice to his person, than any real disapprobation of his actions; and that he is not to measure himself by the words of his adversaries, that speak their prejudice, not their judgment; oftentimes valuing that inwardly, which they inveigh against outwardly, and cherishing that in themselves, that they tax and discommend in him.

They shall tell him further, that though possibly such and such actions were faulty, and unbecoming in others, yet the difference of his condition alters the case, and changes the very quality of the action. For what should a great person have to do with humility? or the rich and the wealthy with

temperance, industry, and sobriety? Why should a statesman or politician restrain himself to the punctilio's of truth and sincerity? These are the virtues of mean employments and lower minds; they may, perhaps, be commendable in country gentlemen and farmers, but persons that move in an higher sphere, must have a greater latitude and compass for their motion; and it were infinite weakness and inexperience to stick at a lye or an oath, or the taking away an innocent life, when reason of state requires it, and so unshackles its ministers from the bonds of those nice rules that are to hold and direct other mortals.

And if these actions have a cleanly and a successful issue, they shall certainly find sycophants enough to extoll them for the greatest prudence and wisdom that in such grand and difficult affairs could be shown: they shall at least be vouched necessary, and consequently lawful, or as good; and the authors of such actions seldom seek for or desire any further warrant for them than necessity, though it be of their own making.

But that people may not be wicked without some plea or pretence, to cover and protect them from being thought so, there has a very serviceable distinction been found out and asserted by some, between a *religious* and a *political* conscience, in every one that is a governor; the former is to guide him

as

S E R M O N IX. 181

as such a particular person, having a soul to save, the other to rule and direct him, as a person entrusted with the good, safety, and protection of those that are under his government, and consequently empowered to use all those courses that serve as means absolutely necessary to compass such an end: which two capacities, as they are very different, so it seems that they cannot both proceed by the same rule. Forasmuch as a governor, in many junctures and circumstances of affairs, cannot reach the ends of government, in protecting and securing his people, but by sometimes having recourse to those ways and actions that perhaps are not allowable upon the strict rules and measures of religion, which if rigidly and unseasonably adhered to in such instances, may possibly throw all into ruin and confusion.

For answer to which: It is not for me to interpose in what concerns government and governors; it has its mystery, and those that manage it are to be presumed best to understand it; but as for this distinction between a religious and a political conscience, I shall make bold to give it its due, in saying, that in all those cases, in which it comes to be practised, it subverts religion. For to affirm that there is any capacity or condition of man, of which religion is not a competent rule, is to make it a rule infinitely short and insufficient, as to the guidance and di-

182 S E R M O N IX.

rection of the manners and actions of mankind; the great end for which God designs it.

Besides the gross absurdity of placing the same man under two contrary rules; which is to bring him under two contrary duties; and to make him at the same time obliged to do a thing, and yet upon another score discharged from that obligation; which is a ridiculous contradiction,

Many things indeed are distinguished in speculation, that perfectly coincide, and are inseparably the same in practice. And tho' it is not to be denied, that the capacity of a man, and of a governor differ in apprehension; forasmuch as to be a man, and to be a governor, are not the same thing: yet when we come to behold those two capacities, as they really exist in nature, we shall find, that what is done by one is also done by the other, and what befalls one consequentially befalls the other. If the governor sins, the man will not be innocent; and if the man is sick, the governor will find himself but ill at ease. He that breaks the law under one capacity, shall suffer under both, and then, setting aside all the niceties of speculation, if God condemns king Ahab, I believe it will be hard to distinguish the man Ahab out of the same condemnation.

But now, if to perswade men out of the acknowledgment of the evil and unlawfulness

S E R M O N IX. 183

ness of their actions, be flattery; and further, to use arguments and acts to settle them in such a persuasion, be one of the grossest and most detestable sorts of it, especially if religion be abused to so base a purpose; then surely none are so deeply chargeable with flattery as these two sorts of men.

1. Such as upon principles of enthusiasm, assure persons of eminence and high place, that those transgressions of the divine law are allowable in them, that are absolutely prohibited and condemned in others. For thus they reason: That the divine laws and precepts were intended only for the ordinary rules of life, but such as are extraordinary persons, raised up by God for some extraordinary work, are exempted from those common obligations; as being directed by an higher rule, namely, the immediate dictates of the Spirit speaking and acting within them, which Spirit being God, is able to dispense with his own laws, and accordingly does so, as the exigence of those works, that he calls such persons to, shall require. So that for them to rob and plunder, is as justifiable as for the Israelites to rob the Egyptians; and to slay and murder, though it be princes, is but like Phinehas's standing up and executing justice; the inward motions of the Spirit countermanding the injunctions of the outward letter.

N 4

But

184 S E R M O N IX.

But to raise in any such an opinion of themselves, is surely one of the vilest and most destructive pieces of flattery, that can be used by one man to another : For it is to make religion minister the same scope and license to the most impious actions that atheism itself can allow ; and that with this advantage, that it does not trouble the mind with the same stings and remorse, that the professed despiser of religion usually feels in the midst of all his extravagancies : for if a man is brought to believe, that he breaks the divine law with as good a conscience as others keep and observe it, there is no doubt but such a belief will keep him at perfect peace with himself, notwithstanding the most enormous violations of it.

I cannot believe that the authors of our late confusions, could have ever acted in such a bare-faced opposition to all laws, both human and divine, with so much satisfaction, serenity, and composure of mind, had not their seducing prophets thoroughly leavened them with this principle ; that being the select people of God, and so stirred up and peculiarly called to *serve him in their generation*, (as the phrase then ran) they were privileged from those ordinary rules and measures by which the lawfulness and morality of other mens actions were determined. The saints indeed might do the very same actions which in other men were sinful,

SERMON IX. 185

sinful; but yet they in so doing could not sin; and this was that perswasion that still patcht up their conscience, after all the blows and wounds it had received by dashing against the divine precepts.

Such was the soul-destroying flattery, by which those impostors encouraged many thousands in the way of damnation; like that lying prophet, that bid Ahab go and prosper, when he sent him to the battle in which he was to fall and perish.

2. The other sort of persons chargeable with this kind of flattery, are the Romish casuists, who have made it their greatest study and business to put a new face upon sin, and to perswade the world that many of those actions that have hitherto passed for impious and unlawful, are indeed nothing such, but admit of such qualifications as clear them of all guilt and irregularity.

They are not indeed so absurdly impudent as to declare that murder is no sin, but they will order the matter so, that a man may be killed upon many punctilios of credit and reputation, and yet no murder be committed: they will not tell a man that it is allowable to steal, but they will teach, that in case a servant finds that his master will not afford him wages, proportionable to what he judges his own service to be worth, he may take from him so much as will amount to a valuable compensation, and not be

186 S E R M O N IX.

be chargeable with the breach of that law that prohibits a man to steal. They will not deny many actions to be evil; but if a man have but the dexterity and art of directing his intention to some right end, or at least of not actually directing it to an ill; why, then presently the whole action loses all its malignity, and becomes pure and innocent, by a wonderful but a very easy transformation.

It were infinite to draw forth all particulars; but these are some of the ways by which these religious sycophants have poisoned the fountains of morality, and flattered mankind with such doctrines and assertions, as shall sooth them up, and embolden them in the most vitious and lewd courses imaginable. They have opened a well not only for *sinners*, but even for *sin* itself to *wash in*, and *to be clean*. So that if there be any persons in the world who may be justly accused for calling *good evil* and *evil good*, these are the men; and they do it too, diligently, copiously, and voluminously, and consequently have the fullest and the fairest claim to the curse that is joined to that accusation.

But now this kind of flattery is so much the more to be abominated, because as it is of most mischievous consequence, so it is also of very easy effect, and meets with a strange success, seldom returning without accomplishing the work of perswasion, or rather indeed of fallacy and delusion.

Of which a double reason may be assigned,

1. The first taken from the nature of man.
2. The other from the very nature of vice itself.

1. For the first of which ; it is too apparent how fond and credulous most men are, and even desirous to be perswaded into a good estimation of whatsoever they do ; and therefore as some people will buy and use flattering glasses, though they know them to be so, because they had rather please themselves with a false representation, than view their deformity by a true ; so some will catch at any colour or dress, (though never so thin) to give some varnish, and better appearance to their vice.

A perverted disordered mind, if it cannot have arguments and solid reasons to alledge for the legality of what it does, it will content and satisfy itself with flourishes and shews of probability ; and that deceiver that shall labour to furnish it with such, shall be welcome and honourable ; his dictates shall be received as oracles, and never sifted by questions and examinations ; for people are naturally aver se from enquiring after that which they are unwilling to know, and therefore such an one shall be even prevented by a willing forward assent. But it is easy for a man to finish his visit, that is met three parts of his way.

2. The

188 S E R M O N IX.

2. The other reason is from the very nature of vice itself, which oftentimes bears a great affinity to virtue, and so admits of the harder distinction. Upon which account it is no difficult matter to perswade the prodigal person, that he is only very liberal; it being very hard to assign the precise point where liberality ceases, and prodigality begins. Upon the same ground, covetousness may easily pass for providence, and a proud mind be mistaken for an high and generous spirit; there being a great likeness in the actions respectively belonging to each of these, enough to impose upon unwary undistinguishing minds, that are prone to receive every *like* for the *same*.

Now from these two considerations we may easily gather, how open the hearts of most men lie, to drink in the fawning suggestions of any sycophant that shall endeavour to relieve their disturbed consciences, by gilding their villainies with the name of virtues; and so smoothing the broad way before them, that they may find no rubb or lett in their passage to damnation. This therefore is the second thing wherein flattery consists.

III. The third is, the perverse imitation of any ones defects or vices, which seems to carry it higher than the former, forasmuch as actions are much more considerable than words or discourses; a man, for many causes, may be

S E R M O N IX. 189

be brought to commend that which he will never be prevailed upon to follow, but for any one to transcribe and copy out in himself whatsoever he sees ridiculous or impious in another, this argues a temper made up of nothing but baseness and servility.

And to any generous and free spirit, it is really a very nauseous and a fulsome thing to see some prostitute their tongues and their judgments, by saying as others say, commending what they commend, dispraising whatsoever things or persons they dispraise, and framing themselves to any absurd gesture or motion that they observe in them; making themselves as it were an echo to their voice, and a shadow to their bodies. In a word; no man can be exact and perfect in this way of flattery, without being a monkey and a mimick, and a lump of wax for any fool to stamp his image upon.

But surely few would be so sottish and servile, as to break a leg or an arm, or put out an eye, because they see the great person whom they depend upon and adore, deprived of any of these parts. And if so; do they not consider, that a man is to be more tender of his manners, and the dignity of his soul, than of any thing that belongs to his body, which would give him but a small preeminence above the brutes, were it not animated and exalted by a principle of reason.

Every kind of imitation speaks the person that imitates inferior to him whom he imitates, as the copy is to the original; but then to imitate that which is mean, base, and unworthy, is to do one of the lowest actions in a yet lower instance; it is to climb downwards, to employ art and industry to learn a defect and an imperfection; which is a direct reproach to reason, and a contradiction to the methods of nature.

And so much the more intolerable is it, because such persons are seldom seen to imitate the excellencies and the virtues of him whom they flatter; these are looked upon with distance and lazy admiration; but if there be any vice that sullies and takes off from the lustre of his other good qualities, that shall be sure to be cull'd out, and writ upon their lives and behaviour. Alexander had enough to imitate him in his drunkenness and his passion, who never intended to be like him, either in his chastity, or his justice to his enemies, and his liberality to his friends. And it is reported of Plato, that being crook-shoulder'd, his scholars, who so much admired him, would endeavour to be like him, by bolstring out their garments on that side, that so *they* might appear crooked too. It is probable that many of these found it easier to imitate Plato's shoulders than his philosophy; and to stuff out their gowns, than

than to furnish their understandings, or improve their minds.

I am confident there is none that does not deride and condemn this silly piece of officiousness, as scarce to be reconciled to common sense; yet we may find as bad daily in the behaviour of most parasites, who think they can never honour their great masters, but by exposing themselves. Which practice, though it is most irrational, yet it has this to encourage and continue it, that such grantees are wonderfully pleased to see their vices and defects aped by their followers and retainers; indeed much more than to see their perfections drawn into imitation.

And that I conceive for this reason; because vice being weak and shameful, is glad to have any countenance and credit shewn it; which is done by no way so much, as by having many followers. To be vitious alone is a great shame, and few natures are able to bear it; and therefore company gives a kind of authority to sin, and brings vice into fashion, which is able to commend and set off any thing. Nero's killing his mother, could not but be looked upon as an hideous and unnatural thing, for all the senate's publick thanking of him for it, and his courtiers applauding of the action; because in this humanity was too strong for flattery, and suffered none of them to practise what their slavish disposition induced them

them to commend; which shews how much the greater number of flatterers speak against their conscience; for that which a man in the same condition would not do himself, he certainly dislikes in another.

4. The fourth and last thing that I shall mention, wherein flattery consists, is an over-valuing those virtues and perfections that are really laudable in any person. This is a different sort from all the former, which had no foundation of good at all to work upon, but were wholly employed in giving appearances where there was no substance, in painting of rotten sepulchres, and belying vice into the reputation of virtue.

But this is more modest and tolerable, there being some ground-work of desert, though much too narrow for those huge superstructures of commendation that some raise upon it; which therefore turn into flattery, which consists in a partial representation of any thing to be *greater and better* than indeed it is: For truth suffers as much by this, as by the former; it being violated by any disproportion, between the thing as it is *expressed*, and as it does *exist*.

The flatterer views every little virtue or good quality in him whom he resolves to extol (as it were) with a microscope, such an one as shall swell a gnat into an elephant, and an elephant into a mountain. Ordinary, plain, home-spun sense shall be magnified

fied for extraordinary wit and fancy; and good, honest, flat words, shall pass for propriety and exactness of expression.

But to go higher. Let a star be accounted, as indeed it is, a bright and a glorious thing; yet we are not therefore to persuade the world that it is a *sun*. *Herod*, no doubt, in *Acts* xii. 22. spoke like an eloquent man, yet that was short of speaking with *the voice of a god*, as his flatterers told him in that their impious and profuse acclamation. He that should celebrate a captain that had the good fortune to worst the enemy in a skirmish, to the degree of a *Cæsar* or an *Alexander*, would wonderfully stretch and overdo, and render the poor man ridiculous instead of glorious: and every one that measures his actions by any eulogies given him by the flatterer, sets his reputation upon stilts, which is not the surest way of standing; and when he comes to be weighed in the balance of the impartial and the judicious, will be found wanting.

For look, as the detractor represents the perfections of him whom he hates, lessen'd and diminished from what they really are, partly by a malicious concealment, partly by calumny and direct slander; so the flatterer, whose design is managed by a contrary way, (though perhaps in itself the same) greatens and advances every thing beyond the bounds of its real worth; describing all in hyperboles,

*

O

boles,

boles, high strains, and words of wonder, till he has puffed up that little thing that he commends, as we see men do a bladder, which owes all its bulk only to air and wind, upon the letting out of which, it returns and shrinks into a pitiful nothing.

And just so must the opinion that a man conceives of himself from the delusions of flattery, vanish and have its end: for, like a feather, it was raised by a breath, and therefore, when that breath ceases, it must fall to the ground again.

And thus I have finished the first general head under which I cast the prosecution of the words, namely, to shew *what flattery was*, and *wherein it did consist*. I do not profess myself so skillful and experienced in it, or desirous to be so, as to affirm that I have recounted all the ways and methods, all the turnings and meanders, thro' which this various thing uses to wind and carry itself.

But these are enough, to serve as rule by which both to direct our own actions, and to judge of the actions and behaviour of other men. They may convince us how vast a difference there is between flattery and friendship, and between the crafty low mind of a flatterer, and the generous disposition of a friend. But when I have said all of the baseness of this art, yet so long as men find it beneficial, and withal see the
world

S E R M O N IX. 195

world full of those that are willing to be made fools of by it, I believe all that I shall persuade men of, will be this; that they are like to get more by practising of it, than any one else shall get by speaking against it.

O 2

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

PSALM xix. 13. 1st part.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me.

THESE words running in the form of a prayer or petition, may suggest these three things to our consideration :

1. The thing prayed against, *presumptuous sins.*
2. The person making this prayer ; king *David* ; one adorned with the highest elogies for his piety, even by God himself.
3. The means that he engages for his deliverance from the thing he prays against ; namely, the divine grace and assistance : *Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.*

All these things lie naturally and evidently in the text ; and there is no doubt, but that it may be most pertinently handled in a distinct prosecution of them. But I shall chuse rather to frame my thoughts into another method,

S E R M O N X. 197

method, and designing to take in and comprehend all these in the progress of the following discourse, I shall cast the discussion of the words under these two general heads:

I. To shew what these presumptuous sins are.

II. To shew the reason of this so holy and excellent person's so earnestly praying against them.

As for the first of these, *what presumptuous sins are*. In the handling of this, I shall do these three things:

1. I shall shew in general what it is to presume.

2. I shall assign some of the most notable kinds of presumptuous sins.

3. I shall prescribe some remedies against them.

1. And first for the first; *what it is in general to presume*: where, before we proceed to any strict and positive definition of it, we may briefly take notice of the description it lies under in the word of God, which sets forth this sin by various, and those very significant expressions. It calls it a man's *hardening of his heart*: *hardening his neck*, *hardening his face*, and, in a word, *hardening himself against God*. It calls it a *walking frowardly*, and a *walking contrary to God*; as also, a *resisting of the Holy Ghost*; and a
O 3
grieving

198 S E R M O N X.

grieving and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace. It is likewise expressed by a *man's going on in his own ways, and refusing to be reformed*, with the like: that is, all the several evils and provoking malignities that are in obstinacy, stubbornness, impudence, and direct contempt of God, like so many lines in their centre, meet and concur for the making up of the character of presumption.

But that we may yet view the nature of it more closely, and define what it is: To presume, or to commit a presumptuous sin, is for a man in the doing of any unlawful or suspicious action, to expect and promise himself impunity upon those grounds that indeed afford no reason for any such expectation.

So that, to the making up of such a sin, these three integral parts are required:

1. That a man undertake an action, known by him to be unlawful, or at least doubtful.

2. That notwithstanding this, he promise to himself security from any punishment of right consequent upon it.

3. And lastly, that he do this upon motives utterly groundless and unreasonable.

In this order therefore does presumption accomplish its course of acting in the heart of the presuming sinner. For, as for the thing that he is about to do; he either doubts whether it be lawful or no; or he certainly knows that it is unlawful: whereupon, if on either hand he proceeds to the doing of it, he

he infallibly bolts upon a sin, because he certainly acts against conscience, either *doubtful* or *knowing*; both of which will involve him in sin: for, to act against a *knowing* conscience, is apparently *sinful*; and to act also against the *doubting*, from the mouth of the apostle, receives the express sentence of condemnation; *He that doubteth is damned if he eat*, Rom. xiv. last verse.

Now the presuming sinner, knowing the action he is attempting to be unlawful, or, at the best, suspecting it as doubtful, proceeds, notwithstanding this dissatisfaction, to deliberate and advise with himself, whether he should undertake it or no, he argues the case with himself on both sides. On one side he pleads the unlawfulness, or at least the suspiciousness of it, and the great danger that may follow upon either. On the other, he thinks of the pleasure, the profit, and the advantage of the thing under debate, together with a supposed probability of escape and impunity, though he does commit it. And hereupon, as the result and upshot of his deliberation, he comes to fix, and to resolve that he will do it be the consequence what it will; though yet he believes, he shall carry the matter so, as to bring himself off clear and harmless after all: and thus from suspense he proceeds to resolution, and from resolution passes into action; and so stands a perfect, complete, presumptuous sinner be-

fore God, as having brought his sin to maturity and actual commission, through all the by-traces, all the rubbs and impediments that either conscience or providence laid in its way.

From what has been said, we may here observe, that the presumptuous sinner is utterly divested of those two only pleas that can be alledged for the extenuation of sin, as, 1. *Ignorance.* 2. *Surprize.*

And first, as for ignorance. Though the case is such in the rules of morality, that no ignorance of things, lying under necessary practice, can be totally inculpable; and so cannot wholly excuse the guilt of the action occasioned by it: yet as to an extenuation of the degree, we find the plea of it frequently admitted in Scripture; as *the servant that knew not his lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, was therefore beaten but with few stripes*, Luke xii. 48. And our Saviour himself grounds his prayer for his murderers upon their ignorance of what they did, *Luke xxiii. 34. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And St. Paul gives the same account of his obtaining mercy after his blasphemies and persecutions, *1 Tim. i. 13. I obtained mercy, says he, because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief.* So that ignorance, we see, though not by any virtue in itself, but by the mere mercy and goodness, and condescension of God, has prevailed and been

been effectual for the covering of a multitude of sins, not yet grown too big for pardon.

But now the presumptuous sinner cuts himself off from all such plea; for he sins with an high hand, with an open and a seeing eye. His conscience is all the time awake, like a thief that breaks open an house in the face of the sun, and amidst the resorts of a market. The motto of a presuming sinner may be, *Veni, vidi, & peccavi*. The Devil told Eve, that her and her husband's eyes should be opened, upon their eating of the forbidden fruit; and accordingly, most of their posterity have since inherited the power of sinning knowingly and seeingly, of offending their maker with counsel and deliberation. Their eyes are opened indeed with a mischief; but for that very cause their sin is heightened; and it were better for them that they *were blind*, for then, as said our Saviour to the Pharisees, they *would have had no sin*; that is, no sin in comparison: their sin would not have borne so deep a tincture, and been set off with such crimson aggravations.

As sin leaves the soul, so presumption leaves sin itself naked, by drawing from it its covering; and also helpless, by taking away its last asylum and retreat. In both of which it had a fair accommodation from ignorance, which, like darkness, invites sleep; and
so

so is the parent of a little rest and transient quiet to sick, guilty, and disturbed consciences.

Ignorance is looked upon as so plausible a defence, that I have heard and read of those that have studiously been ignorant of the evil of an action where they have passionately desired the pleasure of it: they have endeavoured to shift off the light, and to convey themselves from the inspection of their own consciences, that so their sinful delights might proceed with the greater relish, and the less interruption. A pretty art for men to befool and damn themselves withal.

But such must know, that ignorance affected, and voluntarily procured, is so far from giving any mitigation or excuse to other actions, that it is not able to excuse itself. For who can defend an action, by pleading that he did it ignorantly, when it was in his power not to have been ignorant, when the means of knowledge were before him, and the neglect of them was his choice? Presumption; and such an ignorance, may walk hand in hand, forasmuch as it may be resolved into presumption. It is a blindness brought upon a man, because he would not see; otherwise all ignorance, that is merely negative and inculpable presumption, is utterly inconsistent with, and makes absolutely unpleadable.

2. Presumption excludes all plea from surprise. A plea admitted in human courts for the diminution of the malignity of many crimes. An action not being perfectly evil, but as committed by perfect choice, which is much weakened and disturbed by the hurry of a surprise. And there is no doubt but the mercies of the court of heaven also have some grains of allowance for those actions that men are thus, in a manner, thrown headlong into. But now, where there is deliberation, there can be no surprise; forasmuch as a surprise prevents and takes a man off from all previous deliberation: And presumption is still accompanied with deliberation; it is a sin that proceeds gradually, it destroys the soul soberly, and with design.

But before I go any farther, when I say that surprise takes off from the nature of presumption; so that every presumptuous sin must be supposed to be committed with deliberation. I conceive, that for the preventing of mistakes, this may need some further explication. We must know therefore, that a sin may be said to be committed deliberately; either *formally* and *immediately*, or only *virtually* and *remotely*. Of the former there can be no doubt; for in that sense a man sins deliberately, when he sins with *foregoing* thought, as well as with *present purpose*

purpose of mind. But for the latter, we may take those terms more at large thus : When a man is brought into a sudden heat of passion and confusion of spirit, in which he proceeds to blaspheme God, or to revile his prince, or the like ; this blasphemy and treason of his must not think presently to take sanctuary in this pretence, that it was done only in a surprise of passion, and so ought not to be accounted presumptuous upon this ground, that it cannot pass for deliberate. This, I say, is not to be allowed, because if the man knowingly and deliberately put himself under those circumstances that raised him to that fury of passion, every action done under that passion is *virtually* deliberate, and follows the nature and quality of the first action, as the leading principal cause of all that directly ensued upon it.

A man drinks himself into a present rage, or distraction of mind ; in which condition he is perhaps carried to commit a rape or a murder, which action is indeed in itself sudden and indeliberate ; but, since the man at first engaged in drinking with full choice and deliberation of mind, his passion being caused by that drink, and the murder being caused by that passion, are both of them *virtually* deliberate, as being resolvable into a foregoing choice : upon which score they contract the guilt and foulness of presumptuous
fins,

fin, and so stand rated in the accounts of heaven.

But here, because there is much and frequent discourse in divinity, of a distinction between sins of *presumption* and sins of *infirmity*; and since very much depends upon the right or the wrong apprehending of it in a casuistical theology, as also in the daily practices of men, it will not be amiss to enquire into the ground or reason of this distinction.

What a sin of presumption is, we have declared already; so that the whole business will lie in this, to see what that is that makes a sin to be a sin of infirmity.

Three opinions there are in this matter:

1. The first derives the nature of it from the condition of the agent, or him that commits it.

2. The second derives it from the matter of the action.

3. The third and last, from the principle producing it.

We shall consider each of them in their order.

1. First of all then, there are some who derive the nature of a sin of infirmity from the quality or condition of him that commits it; affirming every sin committed by a believer, or a person truly regenerate, to be a sin of infirmity; partly, because they say, that there is not that absolute and full concurrence

currence of the inward principle in such a one, to the commission of the sin; but chiefly because such persons, being supposed to be fixed in an unchangeable possession of the divine favour, so that they cannot possibly fall from it; no sins can be able to alter their estate; whereupon their sins lose their full effect, and become only lapses and infirmities.

For answer to this; it is not necessary here, either to assert or to deny the perpetuity and unalterable tenour of a regenerate man's estate: but this I affirm, that to take the nature of his actions merely from the condition of his person, is hugely absurd; for that can only infer the pardon of his sins upon another account: but surely a sin changes nothing of its nature by this, that in one man it is pardoned, in another not.

This indeed has been eagerly asserted by some; and in this assertion they laid a foundation for all licentiousness: for, according to the tenour of their doctrine, it was but for them, first to put on a bold front, and to persuade themselves and others, that they were of the number of the converted and the regenerate; and then, whatsoever sins were afterwards committed by them, sunk to a wonderful low degree of guilt, as being chargeable with no higher than what arises from infirmity. In the strength of this doctrine, some would hold David's murder and

and adultery to have been only sins of infirmity ; though each of them complicated, and made up of so many several base sins, and ripened with such deliberate contrivances, that it is hard to commit, or indeed to imagine sins of a blacker hue.

But, for a fuller vindication of the truth, I shall, even upon the supposition and grant of this principle, that a regenerate person never so loses his ground by any sin, as to be cut off from his interest in the favour of God, and his title to heaven ; I shall, I say, yet show the falseness and unreasonableness of the doctrine perversely built upon it ; and that by these following arguments :

1, First: whereas it is said, that persons regenerate sin not with such a plenary and entire consent of will, as others ; for which cause their sin loses many degrees of its malignity. I demand, whether by this they understand not (as in all reason they must) that such persons find in their conscience a greater reluctance to be brought to the commission of sin than others ; and if so, what is their excuse but an higher aggravation of their sin ? that it is committed more against the light and dictates of conscience struggling and contending against it, than the sins of persons wholly un sanctified.

2. But in the second place, I demand further, whether this estate of regeneration does not, according to their own supposition, raise the

the persons so qualified to the privilege of being the sons of God? And if so, I would fain know, whether the unworthy behaviour of a son is not of a more provoking nature than the same deportment from a stranger? A son is capable more of presuming upon his father than a slave or servant upon his master; for one offends only against authority, the other against authority mixed with love, and endeared with the nearest relation. I conclude therefore, that this is so far from degrading a sin to the smallness of an infirmity, that it stamps it ten times a greater presumption than it would be, if committed by another person.

3. and lastly, If the sins of persons regenerate must all pass for infirmities, then how comes David here (who surely was not the last or meanest of this number) to pray so earnestly to be kept from sins of presumption? If the nature of his condition secured him from all possibility of falling into them, where was the danger? And if no danger, where was the necessity of praying to be rescued from an impossibility? But it seems David steered his actions by a different divinity, and looked upon this as the most dangerous presumption of all, to call sins of presumption sins of infirmity. And thus much in answer to the first opinion.

2. Some derive the nature of sins of infirmity from the *matter of them*; as that they are committed only in *thought* or *desire*, or sometimes in *word*; but pass not into outward and gross action.

But this also is most false and pernicious, and directly opens a gate to the encouragement of the vilest impieties. For though it must be granted, that our thoughts and desires, and sometimes our words, are less under command than our outward actions; yet to affirm therefore, that whatsoever is sinfully transacted in these, must presently be baptized but an infirmity, is an assertion no ways to be endured.

And for answer to it, I affirm,

1. First, that there is no act producible by the soul of man, that either is or ever was under the power and command of man's will, but is capable of receiving all the poison and guilt, that the will (which is itself the fountain of all sin) is able to infuse into it; and consequently of being a sin of presumption. But now, both *thoughts*, *words*, and *desires* are controulable by the will, which is able to make the soul cease thinking and desiring of any particular thing by diverting and applying it to other objects. And if the will has now lost some of the absoluteness of its primitive dominion, yet when we come to state the morality of actions, we are to consider the power it had naturally

P

turally

turally and in man's innocency, and has since lost by its own fault; but stands therefore no less accountable for it to God, than if it were not lost.

2. But secondly, let us hear the voice of God in the Scriptures concerning this matter. There, I am sure, are loud complaints of the sins of mens thoughts; *Esa. lv. 7. Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts*, says God; and *Jeremy iv. 14. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* And in *Mat. xv. 19. From the heart*, says our Saviour, *proceed evil thoughts, murders, and adulteries*. We see here evil thoughts put into the same catalogue with murders and adulteries; and these surely are not sins of infirmity. But above all, take that place in *Acts viii. 22.* where St. Peter bids Simon Magus *pray to God, if peradventure the thought of his heart might be forgiven him*.

And then for desires; we know that in God's account they stand for actions. In *Matt. v. 28.* Christ calls the unlawful desire of a woman adultery. And God still complained of his people, that *their heart went after idols*; and in *Psalms lxxviii. 8.* it is said of them, *that they tempted God in their heart*.

But that evil desires carry so high a guilt with them, is no less evident from mere reason: for if the evil of the thoughts lies under so great a condemnation before God, that
of

of the desires must needs lie under a greater; forasmuch as desire is a further step and advance of the soul into sin; and is indeed the very pulse of the soul naturally showing the temper and inclination of it.

And so much for the second opinion.

3dly, and lastly, the difference of a sin of presumption and of infirmity may be drawn from the principle immediately producing the action; as namely, that the will is carried to the one by malice, to the other by inadvertency. And this is that, that reason will force us to pitch upon. For there is no doubt, but an evil choice (the thing here meant by *malice*) is that which greatens the impiety and guilt of an action into the nature of presumption; which action, done out of a sudden incogitancy, might pass for but a *weakness*, and so stand rated at a much lower pitch of guilt.

Certain it is therefore, that malice is that that constitutes the nature of presumption, and inadvertency that makes a sin to be but an infirmity. But then, to draw this down *à thesi ad hypothesein*, and to determine the bounds of each, by showing exactly where malice ceases, and where a faultless inadvertency begins; this, I confess, is most difficult, and, perhaps, by any one common rule, constantly and universally applicable to every particular action, not to be effected.

But, for our better conduct in a case of such importance, I shall shew first negatively, *what is not* a sin of infirmity. 2dly, *what positively is*.

As for the negative part, we are to observe,

1. That whensoever a man ventures, and designs to commit a sin upon this ground, that he judges it a sin of infirmity; that sin, by such antecedent thought and design beforehand, is changed from a sin of infirmity into a sin of presumption. For though an infirmity be *comparatively* but a little sin, yet it is far from an infirmity to account any *sin little*, and much more upon that ground to commit it. Men are apt to say, (in their hearts at least) that such or such a thing is no great matter; and therefore, surely, they need not so much scruple the doing of it; but such must know, that this argues a cursed undervaluing of the evil of sin, and a desire to take any advantage to commit it; than which there cannot be a greater proof of a corrupt, rotten, and un sanctified heart.

2. That sin, though in itself never so small, that a man after the committing of it, is desirous to excuse or extenuate, by charging it upon surprise, passion, weakness, company, or the like, does by such excuse cease to be an infirmity: for when a man comes to defend his sin, it shews that he has an hearty kindness for it, and dislikes nothing in it but the

the consequent danger; than which temper of mind few actual sins are more loathsome and provoking in the sight of God.

But in the next place, to pass from negatives, and to show *positively*, what a sin of infirmity is: I conceive it may not unfitly be defined a sin committed out of mere sudden inadvertency, that inadvertency not being directly caused by any deliberate sin immediately going before it. The reason of this has been given already, viz. that the consequent actions follow the guilt and nature of the antecedent action that caused them. But for the better clearing of the thing discoursed of to our apprehensions, that I may also give an instance of this kind of sin; I suppose, when a man, being suddenly urged and provoked vehemently, conceives an angry thought or utters an hasty word, that that thought and that word may be reckoned for infirmities. And when an unlawful desire suddenly strikes the mind, but a man's heart immediately smites him for it, so that he presently checks that desire, this also, I conceive, may be reputed a sin of infirmity. But God knows, few sins pass from us thus. Sin is scarce ever acted by us, but with the full force and power of all our faculties. And it is seldom that we do any thing faintly, when it is to dishonour God, or to ruin ourselves.

214 S E R M O N X.

And thus I have finished the first branch of the first general head ; which was to shew *what it was in general to presume*, and wherein the nature of a presumptuous sin did consist,

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, might, majesty and dominion, now and for ever. Amen.

SER-

S E R M O N XI.

P S A L M xix. 13. 2d part.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.

II. **I** Come now to the second, which is to assign some of the most notable kinds of presumptuous sins.

Concerning which, I shall premise this in general. That there is no sin committable by man, as to the kind of it, but by circumstances is capable of being made a sin of presumption. Upon which account it would be infinite to set down all the several kinds, and therefore I shall only insist upon some of the greatest remark for their malignity, and such as it most concerns the souls of men to be clear and secure from.

216 S E R M O N XI.

For a man to sin upon hopes, or confidence of pardon or mercy, I cannot reckon as a particular kind of presumptuous sin; this being the general nature of presumption running through all the respective kinds and species of it. For he that presumes to offend, promises himself pardon from God's mercy, without any warrant from God's word.

The particular kinds therefore of presumptuous sin, that I shall cull out and insist upon, are these that follow :

1. The first is to sin against the goodness of God, manifesting itself to a man in great prosperity. Every beam of God's favour to a sinner in these outward enjoyments, is a call to repentance upon the stock of ingenuity. And the apostle's exhortation in *Rom. ii. 4.* lies full against the neglecter of it, *Despiseſt thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* Every breath of air that the sinner takes in, is a respite given him by mercy from sin-revenging justice. Every morsel he eats, and every drop that he drinks, is an alms, and a largess, and a repast, that he has no claim to.

But when mercy shall rise higher, and from the benefit of a bare subsistence, serve his convenience, and, what is more, his abundance; when providence shall make his encrease bigger than his barns, and his incomes to upbraid

braid the narrowness of his coffers; when it shall add a lustre to his person, and at the same time multiply and advance his family; when it shall appoint angels for his guardians; and, in a word, set an hedge about all that he has: For such a one to rise up and spurn against his maker, to make all his plenty and greatness, the drudge of his luxury and ambition; so that his sins shall outvie his substance, and the very effects of mercy be made the weapons of unrighteousness; for him therefore to sin because he is great, and rich, and powerful, that is, because providence has by all this obliged him not to sin: is not this the height of ingratitude, as ingratitude is the height of baseness?

Samuel upbraided David for his two great sins, by recounting what God had done for him, and how open-handed providence had been to him, in heaping upon him all external blessings, even to the anticipation and exceeding of his desires. *Behold*, says the prophet, in the name of God, 2 Sam. xii. 8. *I had given thee such and such things.* And certainly these things are mercies: those, I am sure, that enjoy them, would confess them so in the want of them. For let such a one reflect upon the thousands, and the ten thousands of calamitous persons round about him, and tell me a reason why he should stand exempted from the same lot; why providence should be so fond of him, as to make him swim

swim in pleasure, while others are sinking under their necessities? When he sees this man roaring under pain, that man languishing under sickness, another hawled to prison for poverty and debt, another starving with cold and hunger, let him tell us what obligation he has laid upon God, that he should be healthful in his person, flourishing in his condition, full in his revenues, and sit down to a table, the very scraps of which were a feast for many persons much more holy and virtuous than himself.

But to go a little farther, while he is thus provided for (as we have observed) not only as to convenience, but also supplied as to affluence; can he tell me, why he is all this time permitted to live, and to tread the earth? Why he is not in hell, roaring in the flames, and bemoaning himself in the regions of the damned. Whether his sins have not long since deserved it, and whether both the mercy and justice of God might not be glorified in his destruction: and whether many whose sins were fewer and smaller than his, have not been cut off from the earth in wrath, and disposed of into that remediless estate of torment. Can he ascribe this reprieve to any thing but to mercy, to mere undeserved mercy, that places the marks of its favour absolutely and irrespectively upon whom it pleases?

But

But now is there any gross sin, that such a one can commit, that is not a direct defiance to the designs of this mercy? There is not any temporal blessing that a man enjoys, that shall not be reckoned upon his eternal account. That sentence shall appear fresh and fierce against him, *Son, thou receivedst thy good things.* And it is not so much his having sinned, that shall condemn him, as his having sinned in pomp, in plenty, and magnificence. His having sinned against the bounties and endearments of providence; this is that that shall rank him with those leading sinners, whose portion lies deeper in the bottomless pit, than that of ordinary offenders.

2. A second sort of presumptuous sins, are sins committed under God's judging and afflicting hand; than which there cannot be a more open, and professed declaring of an opposition to God; it being little short of sending a challenge to heaven. It is a striking of God, while God is striking us; and so (as it were) a contention who should have the last blow. For a child to commit that fault under the rod, for which the rod is upon him, shews an incorrigible disposition, and a malice too great to be chastised into amendment.

What does God send forth his arrows for, and shoot this man with sickness, another with poverty, and a third with shame, but
to

220 S E R M O N XI.

to reclaim and to recover them? to embitter the sweet morsels of sensuality to them, and to knock off their affections from sinful pleasures? For God makes not the miseries of men his recreation, it is no delight to him to hear the groans and the sighs of a distressed person. It can be no diversion to the surgeon to hear the shrieks, and the cries of him whom he is cutting for the stone; but yet he goes on with his work, for he designs nothing but ease and cure to the person whom he afflicts.

God would make men better by soft and persuasive means, he would *draw them with the cords of a man*, but when these prevail not, he is drove to the use of his whips and his scorpions: but if these prove ineffectual too, the man is too great a sinner to be corrected, and consequently to be saved. When a man comes three or four times out of God's furnace with his dross about him, it is a sign of a reprobate and a cast-away. God complains of the house of Israel, *Ezek. xxii. 18. That they were dross in the midst of the furnace.* When the flesh is so proud, that it scorns all the powers of a corrosive, it is an argument that it is incurable, and fit for nothing but to be cut off. God speaks it with a certain pathos and expostulation, and, as if he were even brought to a nonplus, *Esa. i. 5. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt still more and more.* Some are
so

S E R M O N XI. 221

so obstinately bad and confirmed in their vice, that judgments and afflictions are but thrown away upon them; and God's shooting at them, is but like shooting at a mark, which indeed *receives* the arrow, but does not at all *feel* it.

But such persons must know that their sins are rendered infinitely more daring and provoking by the distress of their condition. God throws them upon the ground, and they, instead of being humbled, rage and rave, and throw the dirt in his face. This is properly a man's *hardening himself against God*. The Holy Ghost speaking of a wicked prince of Judah, sets forth the height of his wickedness by this character, *2 Chron. xxviii. 22. In the time of his distress did he trespass, yet more against the Lord. This is that king Ahaz*. What a brand does he give him? as if he had said, this is that monster of men, that spot of nature, that prodigy of impiety. It is the property of dogs to snarl under the whip, and to fly in the face of him that strikes them.

There is never an affliction that befalls any man; but it comes with this motto written upon it by the finger of God himself; *Go sin no more, lest a worse evil come unto thee*. Has any man felt the hand of God, upon his body, his estate, or his family, or any concernment that is dear unto him? Why let him hear his voice also; his admonishing;
his

222 S E R M O N XI.

his counselling voice, *Sin no more lest a worse evil happen unto thee.* Has God snatched away a man's child? God can snatch away his estate too. Has God took away his estate? he can take away his friends also. Has he bereaved him of his friends? he can likewise bereave him of his reputation. Has he blasted his reputation? he can proceed to touch him in his health, and with the most miserable of distempers to smite him with madness, phrenzy, and distraction. And after all this, God has more ways to plague his rebel creature, than our poor short apprehensions can reach unto.

But now for a man to sin against all this; to laugh at all these warning periods of heaven; What is it but a kind of waging war with God? Well may every serious person be still putting up this prayer, *Lord keep me from this kind of presumption:* for certainly wheresoever it is, it places a man but a fingers breadth from destruction.

3. A third sort of presumption, is to commit a sin clearly discovered, and directly pointed at by the word of God, either written or preached. The word sometimes meets the sinner with that power and clearness, that his conscience even forces him to cry out, and arraign himself; *This is my sin, and I am that sinner* that is preached against. He finds it not in the power of his invention, by any art or evasion, to elude or shift off the charge,

it

it comes so home and close to his condition. It is to his sin, as a looking-glass to his face; it represents it in every shadow, lineament, and proportion: so that the preacher might be even thought to have had a correspondent in the man's breast, and to have held intelligence with his heart: he gives him so exact and particular an account of the several ways, methods, and actings of his sin.

Now for a man to turn his back upon all these bright discoveries of his sin, to commit it (as it were) with the word yet sounding in his ears, and full and quick in his memory; it is like a man's offending not only against a law, but a law rubbed up, renewed, and set afresh before mens eyes, by the King's proclamation.

It is but too usual to see some persons, who, at church, feel their consciences searched and lanced, and the word even lashing their sin over the face; yet presently, like Sampson after the Philistines had been upon him, to go out and shake themselves a little, and forthwith become the very same men that they were before. They are as ready for their cups, for their rotten, obscene, and profane discourse, and, in a word, for all kind of lewdness: as if the preacher had not reprov'd their vice, but produced new arguments to encourage it; and exhorted them to persevere diligently in those blessed paths in which they
are

are sure to have the devil for their leader, and their lust for their companion.

But the word of God will not be baffled and put off so : where it finds no reception, it will be sure to leave a guilt, and no man can despise it securely : the more clearly it informs, being rejected, the more fiercely it condemns. For surely we cannot imagine that the great God of heaven is so cheap in his addreses to men's souls, as, according to his own expressions, *to wait, to rise up early, and all the day long to stretch forth his hands* to the sons of men, in setting out the nature and danger of sin before them ; only that they may have opportunity to shew how little these things change and move them ; how hardy and obstinate they can be in holding fast their vice (as it were) in spite of heaven, and maugre all the divine warnings, threats, and admonitions.

This is none of the least degrees of presumption : for supposing that the sinner has not shook off the first pinciple of self-preservation ; while he ventures and proceeds confidently in a sin marked out for vengeance by the voice of God himself, he must needs question either his truth, that he will not, or his power that he cannot, make good what he says, by punishing as severely as he threatens.

4. A fourth Sort of Presumption is to commit a Sin againſt certain Paſſages of Providence, particularly thwarting, and, as it were, lying croſs to the Commiſſion of it. God is ſo merciful to, and careful of ſome Men's Souls, that when his Words make no impreſſion, he is pleaſed, in a manner, to put forth his Hand, and, by ſome kind of Force, to withhold a Man from the perpetration of his intended Villainy, as by daſhing the Opportunities of ſinning with ſome unlook'd for Accident; ſo that the Thread and Chain of all his fine Contrivances is, for the preſent, broke.

It were infinite to recount Particulars; each Man may collect enough from his own Obſervation. The Drunkard's merry Meetings are put off and defeated by the interpoſal of emergent unexpected Buſineſs; The Deſigns of the revengeful Perſon, by the intervention of Company, perhaps by Sickneſs, or ſome other Miſfortune diſabling him for the Execution of his malicious Purpoſes: Nay, and ſometimes the Fruſtration and Diſappointment ſhall be ſo repeated, and withal ſo ſtrange, that the Sinner's Conſcience, cannot but tell him that the Finger of God is in the whole Affair, and that the Almighty himſelf withſtands him: In which caſe, for him ſtill to hold on his wicked Deſign, and to look for new Opportunities to bring it to Birth; to make freſh attempts, and to try other courſes; it argues a Man furiously and invincibly ſet upon

*

Q

of-

offending God, and pursuing the Satisfaction of his Son over all those Mountains of Opposition that Heaven has raised in his Way.

Thus we see nothing could withhold *Pharoah* and his Host from following the *Israelites*, for in the xiv *Exod.* v. 24, 25. It is said first, *that God troubled them*, then that *He took off their Chariot-wheels, so that they drove heavily*: And lastly, such a Terror seized them, that they cried out *let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians*; yet nothing could recall *Pharoah*, till *Moses* stretch'd out his Rod upon the Sea, and it returned and swallowed up him and his whole Army, so that they sunk like Lead in the mighty Waters.

And then for *Balaam*, whose story we have in the xxii of *Numb.* his Heart was all that time upon the rich enticing offers of the King of *Moab*; yet how many rubs and repulses did God cast in his way, and with what difficulty did he go after *the ways of Unrighteousness*; yet go after them he did, and upon that score stands recorded in Scripture for as presumptuous and resolved a Sinner as any is mentioned in the sacred Story.

Those who break through all those Mounds and Hindrances that God has laid between them, and the Gratification of their Vice, imitate *Balaam's Sin*, and may expect to inherit his Damnation.

5. A fifth Kind of presumptuous Sins are, Sins against the inward Checks and Warnings of Conscience about the Evil of any Course or Action. We may call them the Checks of Conscience, though I doubt not but that sometimes they are the immediate Whispers of God's Spirit in the Soul; but it matters not much which they are, it coming all to one result; whether God speaks immediately by himself, or by his interpreter, for so is the Conscience uttering every thing in the Name and Authority of God: That there are such inward checks and startings of the Soul at the attempt of any great Sin is most certain, and I appeal to the Mind of every particular Person that hears me, whether he has not often found a struggle within himself, and a kind of pull-back from the Sin that he has been about to engage in, raising such questions in his Heart as *Joseph* put to himself, how shall I do this great Wickedness and Sin against God, and how shall I answer it at the last Day? and, What if I should die before I repented of it? and, May it not for all its present Promises of Pleasure, *be bitterness* in the latter End? I know every one (now excepted) feels something like this within himself: it is a thing of universal Experience, and no Man can deny it.

Now from whence, and for what can all these Suggestions be sent into the Heart? What is the Reason, that there is such a kind of thing within

us, ready (as it were) to catch us by the Arm and to bid us hold our Hand when we are putting it forth to the Commiſſion of any Sin? Surely they are the Spiritual Engines of God planted by him in the Soul to wield it this way and that way, to the Proſecution of virtuous, and from the purſuit of vicious Courſes: they are the Characters of every Man's Duty drawn and engraven upon his Heart; they are the Expositors and faithful Reporters of the Mind of God to a Man concerning the Quality of every Action that he is about to do.

And to thwart and trample upon them is to preſume upon God to that degree that is call'd a *Reſiſting of his Spirit*. It is to extinguish the eternal Light: and to ſhut our Eyes that we may the more boldly leap down this diſmal Precipice into the Arms and Embraces of our Sin. However, ſuch Preſumers muſt learn, that he who now warns us from Sin in a *Still Voice*, when he comes to reprove and judge for Sin will do it in Thunder. And there is not one of theſe inward, gentle (and as they think) inconfiderable movings and endeavours of the Conſcience againſt Sin, but ſhall one day come into Account, and be reckon'd in the Catalogue of its Aggravations.

So that if we ſhould imagine a Sinner pleading the Excuse of his Sin before God, *that* he was puſh'd on to the Acting of it by a clamorous furious Principle within him, his violent
 Af-

Affections, his Mouth would quickly be stop'd and all his Plea cut off by this one demand : Whether he did not find another Principle within him, as much Protesting against that Sin, as passionately dissuading and drawing him off from it, painting the Evil of it before his Eyes, and laying the sad Consequents of it home to his Heart. All this will and must be granted, and therefore he that Sins against these inward Checks, *Presumes, and what is more, he presumes Inexcusably.*

6. A sixth Sort of Presumptuous Sins are, Sins against that inward *Tast, Relish, and Complacency* that Men have found in their attempts to walk with God, and comply with the Precepts of the Gospel. The former are Sins against the Sight, these against the Tast of God's Favour. For the Explication of which, we must observe, that some Persons wrought up and warmed by the Word into good Resolutions, set forth for Heaven, and intend with themselves a dereliction of the World, and a living up to those divine Rules of Piety taught and proposed by the Saviour of the World, the great Instructor of Souls. Hereupon, by reason of the native Suitableness of those excellent things taught by him to the generous Principles of Vertue, naturally planted in every Mind ; a Man, upon the least compliance with them, finds a strange exalting Pleasure and Satisfaction arising from thence, much superior

230 S E R M O N XI.

to all the poor Delights of Sensuality, this is called in the xiii *Matth.* v. 20. *A receiving the Word with Joy* : And it is said of *Herod* in the vi *Mark* v. 20. *that upon the Baptists preaching he did many things, and heard him gladly* : And there is mention of some in the vi *Heb.* v. 4. *that had tasted of the heavenly gift.*

Now this is that Relish and inward Complacency than I spoke of, and which I said might be finned against. For I doubt not but God gratifies new Beginners in the Ways of Piety with certain Strictures and Tasts of spiritual Pleasure, in vain to be sought for any where else : They are transient Discoveries of himself; the very Glimpses of Heaven, and Drops of an overflowing Bounty.

And I doubt not also but many who have been admitted to a Participation and Experience of these Priviledges, have yet, through the force of Temptation, the Entanglements of the Flesh, and the Deceitfulness of their own Hearts, been so far turned aside, as to have all these Impressions worn off their Minds, and in the issue prove wretched Apostates. For these are not the peculiar Mercies of the Elect, who are loved with an everlasting Love, but Kindness of a lower Degree. God may drop such Manna upon those that shall never enter into *Canaan*; many, like *Moses*, may have a short view of that which they shall never enjoy.

But

But this is that, that we drive at ; that every Apostacy and sinful Backsliding after the Soul has been thus treated by God, is thereby enflamed to the Nature of a great Unkindness and a vast Presumption. For can a Man do any thing more heinous than this ? After God has met him in his Prayers, embraced him in Sacraments, and given him Hope of the Pardon of his Sins ; after all this to turn Rebel ? to hear the Baptist gladly, and within a while to behead him ? Can there be a viler and blacker Presumption ? He that only has a Cordial by him, and baulks the use of it, dies without Remedy ; but he that also tastes it, and then spits it out again, dies without Pity.

And let this be observed, That if such Persons who, like *Agrippa*, were almost Christians, and have been (as it were) in the Skirts and Out-courts of Heaven, chance to Apostatize finally and to perish, the Consideration of this will make the Worm of Conscience bite much more terribly, and the everlasting Flame burn ten times more violently, than if they had gone to Hell, at the common Rate of Sinning, with such as never thought of any other God but their *Belly*, nor any Religion beside their Sensuality.

7. The Seventh and last Sort of presumptuous Sins that I shall mention, is the Returning to, and repeated Commission of the same Sin ; which surely is the greatest demonstra-

tion of a bold, stiff, resolved Sinner that can be. Flies are accounted bold Creatures, and that for a very good Reason; for drive them off from a Place as often as you will, yet, presently, they will be there again. It is not a thing so clear, but it has been disputed by Divines, whether a Relapse into the same Sin, if a gross one, be pardonable. There is great Cause to conclude, that it may and is: the contrary Assertion being a Limitation of Mercy, where the Word sets no Limits to it: yet surely the Case is dangerous, and those two things may be very well consistent, that a Disease is curable, and yet not one of five hundred ever cured of it.

And if one of so many sinning presumptuously in this Nature, has been, by the singular Grace of God recovered, and in the End saved, I should think it would be but a small Encouragement to any, to presume that he shall be *the one* pick'd out of so great a Number. *David* presumed upon the Goodness and Justice of God broadly, and foully enough in those his two great Sins; and so did *Peter* in denying his Master. But we read of no more Murders or Adulteries in *David*, or denials of *Christ* in *Peter*: and God knows if there had, what would have been the Issue of such a Presumption in either of them?

This is a sinning against the common Methods of Nature, as well as the Obligations of Grace.

Grace. For it is natural to all Men, nay, even to most brute Animals, to avoid that Thing or Place, where they have met with some notable Mischief or Disaster. There is a lasting Horror of it imprinted upon the Spirits that presently works and shews itself upon the Sight of the hurtful Thing. Some Stomachs never can abide a Liquor or Meat wonderfully grateful to them before, after they have had some loathsome Physick convey'd to them in it: Now there can no Reason be assigned why Men should not be thus affected also as to Spirituals.

A Man commits a gross Sin, and by it makes a great Breach upon the Peace of his Conscience, loses all present Sense and Feeling of the Favour of God, and, perhaps, over and above, finds some outward fierce Expressions of his Wrath in the Discomposure of his worldly Affairs, so that both within and without, the Man is distemper'd and disorder'd, and infinitely at a loss how to resettle himself in his former calm Condition. But at length, by Divine Favour, he does regain his former Ground: and, perhaps, within a while, his former Sin also presents itself to him with fresh Enticements and little renewed Arts of Perswasion, What will the Man do now? will he let the old stale Cheat new-dress'd be acted over upon him the second Time? will he venture the Loss of God's Favour once more? and try whether his
par-

234 S E R M O N XI.

pardoning Mercy will hold out as long as he is pleased to abuse it? will he have his Conscience about his Ears again, and break his Leg, because once by much Pain and Misery he got it Sett in the like Case?

If he does, Let him know that he is incorrigibly presumptuous, *he crucifies the Son of God afresh*, is a profess'd despiser of Mercy, and by this daring return to his former Sin, that had so fearfully maul'd and shatter'd him ; has (to say no more) put his Repentance, his Recovery, and Salvation, under a very great Improbability. And thus much for the second Branch of the first general Head, which was, to assign some of the most notable Kinds of Presumption.

S E R-

SERMON XII.

PSALM xix. v. 13.

Keep back thy Servant also from presumptuous Sins, lest they get the Dominion over me.

THE Prosecution of these Words was first disposed under these two general Heads.

I. To shew what these Presumptuous Sins was.

II. To shew the Reason of this so excellent and holy Person, the Psalmist's, so earnest Praying against them.

The first of these I proposed to be handled under these three Particulars.

1. To shew what it was in general to presume.

2. To shew and assign some of the most remarkable Kinds of Presumption.

3. To propose some Remedies against these Sins.

The

236 S E R M O N XII.

The two first of which being dispatch'd, I proceed now to the third and last.

The grand and general Remedy against presumptuous Sins, surely must be to arm the Understanding, and to check the Exorbitance of the Will by Consideration: for the Employment of which, with matter in reference to the Sins we are treating of, these three Things offer themselves to be considered.

1. Let a Man endeavour to fix in his Heart, a deep Apprehension and Perswasion of the transcendent Evil of the Nature of Sin in general: Which is no less than a direct Affront to our Creator and Governor in a Breach of that Law, that he values as a transcript of his own Holiness, and enforces by the Penalty of eternal Death threatened to the Violators and Transgressors of the least Iota of it. The Foundation of Men's Apostacy from God, seems to be laid in the Undervaluing Thoughts they have of Sin. It is but as a Mote in their Eye, not for any Trouble that it gives them, but for their Opinion of its Smallness. The easiness of the Commission of it, hides the monstrous greatness of the Provocation: and Men can sport away a Soul so quickly and so easily, that they can scarce be brought to think themselves any Poorer for the Loss.

But since it is difficult to view the Nature of a Thing immediately in itself, let Men read the
the

the Nature of Sin in the dismal History of the Effects and Consequents of it. And for this, let them first see the Ruin of a whole Species, and the fall, not of Man only, but of Mankind effected by it. Let them view *Adam* tumbled out of *Paradise*, embased in his Nature, and cursed in his Actions, with a perpetual Toil and Misery entailed upon his descending Posterity. Let them also see a Deluge breaking in upon the Earth, and the whole World lying under the destroying Element, and they shall find that it was Sin that open'd the Sluices of Heaven, and break up the Fountains of the great Deep. Sin was the Thing that made God almost unravel the Works of an whole Creation, and deface the Draughts of his own Hand.

He that shall read the several Captivities, Bondages, Dispersions, and Massacres of the *Israelites*, reads so many Comments upon Sins, so many lively Descriptions of the destructive Force of a mighty Guilt. But he that would bring the Matter to a Compendium, and see all in One, let him see the only Son of God fetch'd out of the Bosom of his Father to bleed and suffer, and die upon the Cross; that is, to die a vile, cursed ignominious Death. Let him see his very Father his Executioner, and preparing him a Cup full of the Dreggs of an infinite, flaming Fury, to be drunk off by him. And all this, not for any personal Sin of his
own,

own, but for the Sins of Others, took upon himself merely by Imputation : so that being found under this, neither the Dignity nor Innocence of his Person, could secure it against the Nails and the Spear, the Scoffs and the Flouts, the Gaul and the Vinegar, that our Sins had prepared and infused for him.

And lastly, To add a later, since there can be no greater Instance of the Malignity of Sin : when we shall have the Fabrick of this beautiful Frame of all Things, fixed and torn down about us, the Elements melting with *servent heat*, and the Heavens passing away with a Noise ; when the Universe shall be reduced to its first Principles, and Time shall be no more ; when the Judgment shall be set and the Books opened, then we shall understand that it was Sin that made all these Desolations, that kindled these Fires, and will be yet kindling much greater.

Now let a Sinner consider all these Passages, and when he has considered them, let him know that there is unspeakably more Evil in Sin than in all these. For God can destroy and confound a World, but he cannot Sin : And *Christ* could submit to all the Violences of Cruelty, all the Loads of Contumely, but He who could do all this, could not be brought to commit the least Sin.

Nor is this to be wondered at ; for as every Quality flows much more plentifully in the Cause,

Cause, than in the Effect : So Sin, that causes and produces all these Evils, must needs contain a much more redundant Evil in itself. But now after all this, the presuming Sinner must yet further consider, That all the Evil he has hitherto heard of, is but the Evil of Sin, considered barely as Sin : and then let him collect, that Presumption is the very Poyson and Gall of Sin itself, the highest Degree of it, Sin then reigns and sits in its Throne, when it is once advanced to the Nature of being presumptuous : So that Presumption is a Sin (if it were possible) something more *than sinful*.

2. Let a Man most seriously consider and reflect upon God's Justice. The Hands of Justice are not so tied up by Mercy, but that they are loose enough upon those who have no Title to Mercy : And such the greatest Part of the World are, who may possibly, by a redundant Bounty, *enjoy*, but they cannot *claim* it ; for, as God deals with Men upon a double Account, either of the Gospel, or of the Law, the Tenour of the former of which is, *That there is no condemnation to such as are in Christ Jesus ;* that is, to such as believe and repent, and become new Creatures : and the Tenour and Voice of the Latter is, *Cursed be every one that continueth not in all things written in the Law to do them ;* so these two Dispensations divide and comprehend all Mankind ; whereupon those who are
not

not under one, are certainly ranged under the other. Those who have not by sincere Repentance, and the Fruits of it, reached the Conditions of the Gospel, are under the Lash and Dint of the Law. In the Execution of whose Sentence the Divine Justice reigns and shews itself, as the other is the proper Scene of Mercy.

But now, while a Sinner presumes and sins confidently; upon what grounds of Certainty, or indeed of rational Probability, can he conclude himself to be within the Verge and Compass of the second Covenant? There is not a greater and a more dangerous Symptom of a Person wholly estranged from all Right to the evangelical Priviledges. For none can be entitled to these but the Penitent; and can any Man evidence his Penitence by his Presumption? His Sorrow for Sin by a resolved Progress and Continuance in it? And if he can make out no Title here, let him consider, and tremble under the Consideration, that he lives every Minute obnoxious to the Arrests of that fierce Attribute of God, his Justice: He is absolutely under the Power of the Law; that Law that cries for Wrath and Revenge upon the Violaters of it.

So that, as Presumptuous, he is the proper Object for Wrath and Justice to discharge itself upon. Mercy indeed wards off all these dreadful Blows, but it does not this universally and
and

and promiscuously for all, but for those only, who by certain Conditions are qualified for the proper Subjects of Mercy, as others are of Justice. Where we may observe, that each of these Attributes confine their Working within their proper Object, and encroach not upon the respective Bounds of each other. He that is a Vessel of Mercy, is out of the reach of Justice; and, He whom the Law consigns over to Justice, so long can have no Protection from Mercy.

The impartial Thought of which, surely, should be sufficient to disabuse the Confidence of the Presumptuous and to rectify his wild, unlimited Apprehensions of that pardoning Grace, which speaks Pardon to none while they *presume upon it*.

3. Let a Man correct his presumptuous Humour, by considering how much such Offences would exasperate even Men. 'Tis well if some Men can pardon once. But when they see that an Offender grows upon them, takes heart, and reiterates the Provocation over and over, there Patience is out of Breath, tires, and can hold out no longer. *Peter* thought, according to the Rate of the World's pardoning, that he extended Charity to a vast Compass, when he discoursed of pardoning his Brother seven times. He thought that then surely the Acts of Pardon were in their Number of Perfection.

*

R

No

242 S E R M O N XII.

No Man of Spirit will endure that his Clemency should prostitute his Honour, to the saucy Invasions of a bold and a growing Impudence. No Father, will endure that his Son should abuse his Goodness, as if it served for nothing else but only to suffer and forgive. And this is a Thing so known to Men, so implanted in them by Nature, that such as have not wholly shook off all Modesty, dread the very sight of a Man whom they have much presumed upon: and tho' they fear no Punishment from him, yet they find those revolts from Humanity that deject their Countenance, and make them sneak, and fly the Presence of an affronted Person.

Which being so; has not every presumptuous Sinner reason thus to school and upbraid himself? Shall I fear to deal thus and thus with a Man, a sinful Man like my self? a Worm, a piece of living Dirt? one whose Breath and Life are in his Nostrils? And shall I venture to pass the same and greater Affronts upon the omnipotent Creator of the World that can crush me to nothing, that can frown me into Hell, and even look me into endless Destruction? Shall I fear an Anger that lasts but a Moment, and can do but little while it lasts? an Anger that is but as the spleen of a Wasp, a short Phester and Huff of Passion: and shall I provoke such a Displeasure as the very Angels tremble at; a Displeasure that for
its

its Duration is eternal, and for its Weight intolerable?

Men see and converse with that every Day, in the ordinary Passages of common Life, that might invincibly argue them into a better Behaviour towards their Maker. Could we but treat God as a King, as a Magistrate or a Master; of all Sins, those of Presumption would be the fewest. For in the Courts of Men People seldom expect to be pardoned the second Time. But as for God, his Mercy they say is infinite, and therefore they resolve that their Rebellions shall be so too; since there is no exhausting, no coming to the Bottom of an Infinite: and thus they presume to be pardoned so often, that, in the Issue, they fall short of being pardoned once.

— And thus much for the third and last Branch of the first general Head; which was to prescribe Remedies against Sins of Presumption.

2. I proceed now to the other general Head proposed at first, for the Handling of the Words: Which is to shew the Reason of this holy and excellent Person's, the Psalmist's, so earnest praying against these Sins.

I suppose the Prosecution of the first Head, which was to declare to us, *what presumptuous Sins were*, might be Argument enough to declare to us the second also, in shewing the Cause why the Psalmist so fervently prays against them. He prays against them, as a-

R 2

gainst

gainst so many Pests ; so many direful Causes of God's Wrath ; so many devourers of Souls ; and every Prayer made against such things, carries its Reason too visibly writ upon it, to be long enquired after.

But yet for a mere full and explicit discussion of the Point in Hand, I shall endeavour to give some more particular account of the Reasons inducing this holy Person, with so much Zeal, to engage his Prayers against presumptuous Sins. And I conceive the Principal of them may be brought under these two Heads.

I. The Danger of falling into these Sins. 2. The sad Consequences of them if fallen into.

And first for the danger of falling *into* them, this appears in several respects.

I. In respect of the Nature of Man, which is generally apt to be confident ; and to measure its Belief by its Desires ; still presaging the Best, flattering itself, and building broad Superstructures upon narrow Foundations. Few Men feel their Conditions so bad but they find room for Hope : and that which is Hope in some Cases, will rise into Arrogance and Presumption in others.

Most Men are of a debonair, sanguine, jolly Disposition, which never fails to supply those Builders with Materials, who are apt to rear Castles in the Air : So that we may well avouch, that where Despair has slain its Thousands ;

sands; Presumption has slain its ten Thousands.

For Despair seldom breeds but in the melancholy Temper, That inclines men to be thoughtful and suspicious; or in such Breasts, as have been forced into a præternatural Melancholy, by conversing with unskilful Spiritual Guides, of an indiscreet Severity, and pinning their Faith upon ill managed Discourses about Prædestination. But these are but a very small Portion of Mankind, in Comparison of the other: These go in handfuls, the other in Herds, thronging into the broad Way, where Mirth and Confidence carry them, hoping and laughing, into Perdition. Let this, therefore, be the first reason of the Danger of Mens falling into *Presumptuous* Sins.

2. The second Reason is from the Object of Presumption, God's Mercy: Which, though I shew, was limited, and not as boundless and absurd as some Men's Imaginations; yet, there is no doubt, but according to the present Oeconomy of God's Actings, the Exercise of it is of much more Latitude and Extent than the Exercise of his Justice. The Time of this Life is a Time of Mercy, and God delights to make the Experiments of it splendid and illustrious.

Hereupon Presumption strikes in, and advances it into Endless, and Irrational; and uses it not only as an Argument for repenting of

past Sins. (the sole proper Use of it) but as an antecedent Inducement to warrant Sin for the future. The Largeness of Mercy has made it apt to be abused by the Corruption of Man's Heart, which is ready to suck Poyson out of the fairest Flowers of God's Garden; and to make the most amiable of his Attributes, serve the Interest of its vilest Affections.

Let both Law and Gospel denounce Death against the Commission of such or such a Sin; and Presumption shall interpose and tell the Sinner in the Devil's own Words, *Thou shalt not surely die*; and then Mercy shall be alledged for a Proof of this Assertion: That shall be brought for an Encouragement, that God intended only *for a Cure of Sin*.

3. Thirdly and lastly. A Third Reason of the Danger of falling into presumptuous Sins, is from the Temper, who chiefly busies and concerns himself to engage Men in this kind of Sin. It is said of *David*, concerning his Sin in Numbering the People, which put the Sword in the Hand of the Destroying Angel, to give his whole Kingdom such a Blow, *that Satan stood up and provoked David to number Israel*. 1 Chron. 21. v. 1. And of *Judas* it is most particularly remark'd, in the 22 Luke, v. 2. *that Satan entered into Judas*: and so by a Kind of immediate Possession, acted him to the Betraying of his Master, and for *Ananias*, who prevaricated about the Price of his Lands, and

and so endeavour'd (as it were) to put a Trick upon the Spirit of God, the Apostle *Peter* tells him in the 5 *Acts*. v. 3. *that it was Satan that filled his Heart to lie to the Holy Ghost.* Nay, and in that notable Temptation in which he accosted our Saviour himself, the Sin he drove at, was a high Presumption, namely; that *Christ* should cast himself headlong from a Pinnacle of the Temple; *because God had charged his Angels to keep him in all his Ways*; that is, that he should presume to promise himself the Divine Protection in an Action wholly uncommanded, and consequently unwarranted, because God had engaged to secure and guard him in the commanded Instances of Duty and Obedience.

It is clear therefore, that the Devil lays a more than ordinary Stress upon this; and if so, he will be sure to imploy all his Engines to push his Design forward; for he knows that one great Sin does his Work compendiously, and destroys at a Blow. He knows also, that his Design like a two-edged Sword, may chance to cut both Ways. For first he will make a Man *presume* to commit a Sin, and then, if possible, he will make him *despair* for having committed it. Wherefore, if all the Arts and Stratagems of our mortal Enemy can endanger us, we are in danger of being entangled in this Sin: This fatal destructive Sin which is the very Master-piece of the Devil,

248 S E R M O N XII.

and the Gate of Hell ; and consequently have Cause, with bended Knees and bowed Hearts, Night and Day to invoke the Almighty Assistances of Heaven for our Rescue from that Sin ; in the Commission of which every Man so really proves the Murderer of his *own Soul*.

And thus much for the first Reason of *David's* so earnest praying against presumptuous Sins, *namely, the Danger of falling into them* ; as also the several Causes from whence that Danger does arise.

I proceed now to the other Reason, which is *the sad Consequences of these Sins if once fallen into* : Amongst which, we may reckon these that follow.

1. This kind of Sin is marvellously apt to grow and prevail upon him that gives Way to it ; which ill Consequence of it, is deservedly mentioned by me, in the first Place, it being that great and only one that *David* mentions instead of all the rest, *keep* (says he) *thy Servant from presumptuous Sins, lest they get the Dominion over me*. Every Presumption is properly an Encroachment, and all Encroachment carries in it still a further and a further Invasion upon the Person encroached upon. It enters into the Soul, as a Gangreen does into the Body, which spreads as well as infects, and, with a running Progress, carries a Venom and a Contagion over all the Members. Presumption never stops

stops in its first Attempt. If *Cæsar* comes once to pass *Rubicon*, he will be sure to march further on, even till he enters the very Bowels of *Rome*, and break open the Capitol itself. He that wards so far, as to wet and foul himself, cares not how much he trashes further.

When the tenderness of the Soul is lost, and its first Awe of God and Religion broke by a bold Sin, it grows venturous and ready to throw itself upon all Sorts of Outrages and Enormities. It does not demur and tremble as it used to do, when any thing gross and foul was proposed to it, but it closes with it readily, and steps undauntedly into that Stream that is like to carry it away, and swallow it up for ever.

This growing encroaching Mischief, perhaps, first fastens but upon the Thoughts, and they take the Liberty to settle upon some unlawful base Thing, like flies upon a Carcass; from these it advances a step further, and seizes the Desires, which presently are carried out with a restless eagerness after the same vile Object, and these, at length, meet with some friendly Opportunity, by the help of which they break forth into actual Commission, which actual Commission grows from one into many, and comes to be frequent and repeated, till it settles into a Custom, and fixes itself immovably and for ever in a Man's Behaviour.

This

This is the Nature and Quality of Presumption; much like what our Saviour says of the Mustard Seed, which at first is the least of all Seeds, but being grown up, is greater than all Herbs, so that the Birds of the Air lodge in the Branches of it. In like manner Presumption first sows itself in a Thought the least of all Sins for the matter of it, but from thence shooting up into a Custom and an habitual Practice, its grows mighty and wide, opens its Arms, and spreads out its Branches, for every unclean Bird, every sinful Action and Abomination to come and lodge and rest upon.

No Man can assign the Limits, the *ne plus ultra* of Presumption, where it will stay, and with what pitch of Villainy it will be contented: It is as unruly as Power, as boundless as Rebellion; and therefore, he that would preserve his Conscience, and the Peace of it, has cause to keep a perpetual guard upon his Heart, to to stave it off from a *first Admission*.

2. The second ill Consequence of presumptuous Sins, is, That of all others they prove the most difficult in their Cure, for as much as they take away that which is the proper Disposition to it, Tenderness of Conscience; leaving the Heart fix'd and hardened, and not easily capable of any healing Impression. It is impossible for any Man to be brought off from Sin, but by the Sense and Feeling of Sin:

Which

Which Sense, every Presumption does by Degrees weaken and dull, and in the Issue utterly extinguish.

For I shew before, That the proper effect of such Sins, was Custom in Sinning; and with what difficulty that is removed we are told in the 13. *Jerem. v. 23. Can the Æthiopian change his Skin? or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.* The Æthiopian's Blackness, and the Leopard's Spots are natural to them, and there is no washing away Nature, no purging off the essential Properties of things; and therefore this is mentioned as a Difficulty but one Remove from an Impossibility.

Custom and frequency in Sin, breeds a Familiarity with it that produces an Affection to it, and ends in a resolved Continuance in it. And as it is said by the Apostle upon another occasion, *that perfect Love casts out Fear*: So, where Custom has fastned a Man's love upon Sin, the Awe and the Dread of it Vanishes; and the Sinner can break a Precept under the very Eye of Sin revenging Justice, without trembling; without feeling any inward Wound or Blow upon his Heart: which is a Frame of Spirit, leaving a Man not far from a *reprobate Mind* and a seared Conscience; a Disease that laughs at all the Applications of the Spiritual Physician. 51 *Jerem. v. 9. We would have healed Babylon but she is not healed.* And the Truth is,

is, He who comes recovered out of a Course of Presumptuous Sinning, has pluck'd his Foot out of a mortal Snare, a Deliverance never vouchsafed but to the Favourites of Mercy, supplying the Defect and Weakness of the Means by an invincible Grace. And we may say of such an one very properly, as of a Man rising from a Swoon, and the very neighbourhoods of Death, that *He is come to himself.*

3. As Sins of Presumption are more difficultly cured, so they waste the Conscience infinitely more than any other Sins. As really as Blows, and Wounds, and Bruises weaken the Body, and by degrees dispose it to its final dissolution; so certainly do some Sins shake, and batter, and tear down the Constitution of the Soul. Guilt upon the Conscience, like Rust upon Iron, both defiles and consumes it, by degrees gnawing and creeping into it; as that does, till at length, it has eat out the very heart and substance of the Metal. The inward as well as the outward Man has his proper Health, Strength, and Soundness naturally belonging to him; and in proportion, has also his Diseases and Distemper, arising from an irregular Course of living. And every act of Presumption is to Him, as a spiritual Debauch or Surfeit: Things that bring a present Disorder, and entail a future Decay upon Nature.

David was a sufficient Example of this, who complained in the 38 *Psalms*, that there
was

was neither Soundness in his Flesh, nor Rest in his Bones, by reason of his Sin: and that his Wounds even festred and grew noysome because of his foolishness, so that he became as a man in whom there was no Strength. He lost that vigorous athletick Habit of Soul which before made him eminent and mighty in the Ways of God, and now he began to droop and languish like a man that had drank a poisonous Draught, that ever after wasted and consumed his Spirits; so that in the 39th Psalm and the last Verse, he prays to God *to spare him a little, that he might recover Strength, before he went hence and was seen no more.* He that would see what desperate stabs and gashes the guilt of presumptuous Sinning gives the Conscience, should do well to acquaint himself with the Case of *David*, as he himself (dolefully enough) expresses it all along in his Psalms; and if that does not Warn him of his Danger, he is like to learn it too late by the *woful Instructions* of Smart and Experience.

4. Fourthly and Lastly. These Sins have been always followed by God with greater and fiercer Judgments than any others; and for this also we need go no further than *David* for an eminent Instance, and Demonstration: For after those two horrid Sins committed by him, did not God raise up a Rebel against him, not only out of his own House but also out of his own Loins? one that defy'd him both
in

in the Relation of a Father and of a King, that trampled upon his Authority, and abused his Wives in the Face of all *Israel*? Did not God also punish his Adultery with an infamous lewd Action in his Family? his Son committing Incest with his own Sister? and moreover the *Sword was never to depart from his house*: To all which may be added, the Ignominy, the Scoffs and Reproaches that were in whole Volleys discharged at him from all Sides: hard Usage for Majesty and Sovereignty to be treated with: Yet by all this, God was pleased to give him some Taste of the Poison of his Presumptions.

And to proceed to other Instances: Did not the Villainy and Lewdness of a few *Benjamites*; set and resolved upon their Sin against all Admonition, almost consume and reap down an whole Tribe? Did not the Violence and Uncleaness of *Hophni* and *Phinckas* bring a disaster and a defeat upon the Armies of *Israel*? and withal perpetuate an hideous destructive Curse upon their Father's House? did not the Apostacy and Ingratitude of *Solomon* against that God that made him shine like a Star of the first Magnitude amongst all the neighbouring Princes, rend away ten Tribes from his Son at once?

But above all, take that notable Instance of *Manasses*, whose Sins indeed were of that high Strain, that they seemed to surpass all those of
the

the Kings of *Israel* and *Judah*, that were either before or after Him; yet, notwithstanding this, both he himself proved a Penitent, and a Convert at the last; and as for his Son and Successor *Josiah*, he was as eminently transcendent for his Piety, as his Father had been for his Sin; and extended a Reformation every way as large and wide as the former's Corruption. So that one would have imagined that he had cleansed the Land, and even attoned his Father's Abominations: whereupon the Spirit of God gives him this bright and glorious Character. 2 King. 23. ch. v. 25, 26. *that like unto Josiah there was no King before him that turned to the Lord with all his Heart, and with all his Soul, and with all his Might according to all the Law of Moses, neither afterwards arose any like unto him.* And now what follows after all this? Why in the next verse, *Notwithstanding this, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great Wrath, wherewith his Anger was kindled against Judah because of all the Provocations, that Manasses had provoked him withal.* *Josiah's* Goodness could not expiate *Manasses* Sin. The Son's penitential Tears could not wash away the Father's Guilt.

And now, for the Sinner that we have been hitherto discoursing of; if all the former Considerations will not move him, yet let him at least arrest his Presumption with this last. Perhaps the

growing

growing, contagious Nature of his Sin moves him not ; the difficult Cure of it peradventure prevails upon him as little : and it is like, that its aptness to waste, and harden, and debauch the Conscience may make but small Impression upon him ; yet, shall not the Effects of it, the Confusion, the Disaster and the Curse that it is big with, the Curse that will descend like rottenness into his Bones, and strike like a Dart through his Liver ; shall not all this terrify him into Caution and Prayer, into Reformation and Amendment ?

It is the Concernment of God's Justice and his Honour, to meet and confound an audacious Sinner in his Course with some Remarkable Instance of his Vengeance. It is a Clearing of his Providence to the rational World. Men surely have Cause to pray against the Commission of that Sin, which if once committed, may leave a guilt that no Repentance can so wipe of as to discharge the Sinner wholly from all Punishment in this World. God, upon the Intercession of *Moses* was reconciled to the *Israelites* after their making of the golden Calf ; yet the Pardon was mingled with a bitter Al-lay. 32 Exod. v. 34. *Nevertheless* (saith God) *in the Day when I visit I will visit their Sin upon them.* And it was an usual Saying of the *Jewish* Rabbies, that there was no Affliction or Judgment that ever befel the Children
of

of *Israel* but had an Ounce of the golden Calf in it.

And no Sinner can assure himself but that, after all his Prayers, and Tears, and Humiliations, nay, and what is more, his Reconcilement with God, as to his eternal Estate yet as to his Temporal; the Anger of the same God, may, for the Guilt of some gross, presumptuous Sin stick in his skirts, and never cease to pursue and dog him to his Grave, sealing his Offence with that dreadful Sentence in *Isaii*, c. 22. v. 14. *Surely this Iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die.* Which Sentence, as every Presumption will deserve, so it is only in his Power that Pronounces it to prevent.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both now and for ever more.

*

S

SER-

SERMON XIII.

PSALM CXXXIX. v. 3.

Thou compassedst my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways.

IN this Psalm *David* endeavours to possess himself with an holy Admiration of the Excellency of God's Knowledge, which is one of those divine Perfections which we call Attributes; all of which, though they are so many Expressions of God condescending to our Capacities, yet they are so exceeding glorious in themselves, that when we study to search them out, we must needs confute that they are Objects much fitter for our Admiration, than our Understanding. And one of the greatest of these is that which we are now about, to wit, God's Knowledge.

It is such a Knowledge, as sees and comprehends all things, but is comprehended by none; and the best of human Knowledge is so far from equalling of it, that it is its greatest Perfection to be able to express it. But when
we

we have said all concerning it that we can, when we have spent our Inventions and our Words, we must set down and confess with *David*, that *such knowledge is too wonderful for us*, since our highest and most devout Expressions of God, rather testify our reverential Desires of honouring him, than at all express his Nature. Now the Knowledge of God is chiefly wonderful, in respect of the extent and latitude of its Object, as it takes in all things Knowable. But here the Prophet considers it in a more restrained Sense, as it is conversant about the secret and hidden Things of Man, and in this respect it is admirable. It was no small Testimony of the Divinity of our Saviour's Knowledge, *that he knew what was in man and needed not that any one should tell him*, ii *John* v. 25. Certainly none can find out those many windings and turnings, those strange intricacies of the Mind but the great Artificer, that fram'd them. From the 1st v. to the 17th, we have many rare, full and elegant Expressions setting forth God's accurate discernment of the most hidden Contrivances of Men; who, by one cast of his Eye, looks through the whole Scene of our Lives. Whether rising up, or, lying down; waking or discoursing; thinking; yea, before we think; yet unborn and enclosed in the Womb, he clearly sees, and beholds us. The Words that I have read unto you, serve to be a Metaphor,

taken, from Soldiers surrounding the Ways with an ambush, or placing Scouts and Spies in every Corner, to discover the Enemy in his march; thou *Compasshest my path*: thou hast, (as it were) thy Spies over me, wheresoever I go. By *Path*, is meant the outward Actions and Carriage of his ordinary Conversation. By *lying down*, is signified to us, the private and close Actions of his Life: Such as were attended only by Darkness and Solitude. In the xxxvi Psal. v. 4. it is said of the *Wicked*, *that he deviseth mischief upon his head*, to denote not only his perverse Diligence, but also his Secrecy in it: and God is said to *hide his Children in the Secret of his Pavillion*. So that these Places of rest and lying down, are designed for secrecy and withdrawing. When a Man retires into his Chamber, he does, in a manner, for a while, shut himself out of the World. And that this is the fine Sense of that Expression of *lying down*, appears from the next Words, *Thou art acquainted with all my Ways*; where he collects in one Word, what he had before said in two; or, it may come in by way of entrance and deduction, from the former. As if he should say, Thou knowest what I do in my ordinary Converse with Men, and also how I behave myself when I am retired from them, therefore thou knowest *all* my Actions, since a Man's Actions may be reduced either to his public or private Deportment. By the
other

other Expression of *my Ways* is here meant the Total of a Man's behaviour before God, whether in Thoughts, Words, or Deeds, as is manifest by comparing this with other Verses. In the 2d verse it is said, *Thou understandest my thought afar off*, and in the 4th verse it is said, *there is not a word in my mouth, but thou knowest it altogether*. And thus we see, that it was David's scope to show, that the most dark Counsels of Men are exposed to God's view, and this he does, by a distinct enumeration of all the Particulars, *thou knowest my down-sitting and my up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts; thou compassest my path and my lying down; there is not a word in my mouth but thou knowest it; thou hast beset me before and behind; thou coverest me in my mother's womb, and seest my substance being yet imperfect*. He might have comprised all this in short, as in some such like Expression, Lord there is nothing in the Life of Man so concealed, but it is open and manifest to thy discernment. But he chose rather to dilate himself; because a distinct and particular mention of each several Passage, shews not only God's bare Knowledge, but also his Observance of these Things. From hence, therefore, I shall gather this doctrinal Observation, viz.

That God knows, and takes strict and accurate Notice of the most secret and retired Passages of a Man's Life.

262 S E R M O N XIII.

In the prosecution of this Doctrine I shall only prove it by some Reasons, and afterwards make Application, which I chiefly intend.

The The Reasons shall be of *two* Sorts.

I. Such as prove that it is so, that God knows the most secret Passages of our Lives.

II. Such as show whence it is that he takes *such Notice* of them.

I. Reason proving that God does observe the secret Passages of Man's Life is, because he rules and governs them. Government is such a Thing, as requires the highest and most perfect Endowments of Knowledge: The very Wheel and Hinge even of human Government is Intelligence. Can a Man depriv'd of his Sight, manage a Chariot through bye and dark Ways with a steady Hand? Can God, that carries the Rule of all Things in so constant and fix'd a Course, and yet not observe those things? Certainly he could not govern the World by his Power, unless he governed his Power by his Knowledge. In the i *Ezek.* and the 18th verse, God's Providence in the Administration of all things here below, is expressed by a Wheel full of Eyes, to signify God's quick-sighted Knowledge in his Government, and to express also, that those Eyes were always in motion.

The

The Spirit of God attributes the like Knowledge to Christ in his Providential ruling the Church, xxx *Zacch.* v. 9. *Upon one Stone shall be seven Eyes.* By the Stone is here meant Christ, to whom is ascribed perfect Knowledge; by Eyes is signified Knowledge, and the Number denotes Perfections. Now there are three Ways by which God governs the most secret Projects of Man, to all of which there is required a distinct Knowledge.

1. He governs them by discovering of them: Now how is it possible for any one to make that known to another, which he does not know himself: God prudently over-rules most Plots, by a seasonable revealment of them, as the Sun may be said to rule the Day, as it is in the i *Gen.* v. 16. because of his universal Sight, by which he discovers all Things. In the ii *Matth.* v. 20. God disappointed *Herod's* Design of killing Christ; by making it known to *Joseph*: And God made ineffectual the treacherous Intentions of the Men of *Kelab*, in delivering *David* to *Saul*, i *Sam.* v. 23, by discovering to *David*, what they intended against him: Wherefore, it must needs follow, that since God makes hidden Things open to Men, they must of necessity be much more open and manifest to himself.

2. He governs the most secret Intentions, by preventing of them. For assuredly, if God should permit all the Sin that Men conceive in
S 4 their

264 S E R M O N XIII.

their Thoughts to break forth into Action, the World would not be able to continue, by reason of the overflowing Sinfulness of Men. God does therefore prevent and hinder it, and as it were stifles it in the very Birth. Now to be able to prevent an Evil, argues a clear Knowledge of its approach. How many secret Villainies thought of and intended, and even ready for execution, have been turned aside, by God's interposing Providence. In the xx Gen. v. 6. God says of Abimelech, that *he with-held him from sinning against him, and suffered him not to touch Sarah.* Adultery, in all likelihood would have followed, had not God stepped in between the Intentions and Commission of it, and does not this argue God to be a strict discerner of our most private Actions? Wisely to prevent, is an act of the highest Prudence and Experience: That Watchman must have his Eyes open that discerns an Enemy coming while he is yet afar off.

3. God governs the secret Designs of Men, by directing them to other Ends than for which they were intended. Man, may resolve, but God often secretly blows upon his Counsels, and scatters all his Resolutions. In vain do the *Syrians* take Counsel to invade *Judah*, when God says in the vii *Isaiah*. v. 7. *It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.* If God can turn the Designs of Men which way soever he pleases, he cannot but also see
and

and observe them to be able to divert a River in the midst of its most violent Course, from its native Channel, shews more than ordinary Skill. When a Sinner, in the full Career of his Intentions is rushing into Sin, like a Horse into the Battle, then for God to wind him to his own Purposes, it shews him to be of an infinite Wisdom, and withal to have his Eye continually fixt upon that Man's Ways. How privately did *Joseph's* Brethren carry on their Plot against him, with an evil and malicious Intent; yet, God observes their treachery, and what they intended for his Misery; God turns to be a miraculous Means of their own Preservation, xlv *Gen.* v. 5. And thus did *Judas* plot in secret with the Rulers of the Jews to betray his Master; God sees his Design, and withal, orders the most cursed Intention that ever was, to the best and most glorious End: Most excellent therefore must the Knowledge of God be, that describes the most hidden sinful Actions of Men, so as to manage them contrary to their natural Tendency: The Sinner shoots the Arrow, but God takes the aim and directs it to his own Marks. Let a Man sin as secretly as he can, yet he shall not be able to avoid God's Knowledge, nor to contradict his Will; I mean his efficacious and hidden Will; which, by a secret Influence, controls all Actions, even the most wicked, to the Glory of God. From hence we may be assured, that God is
both

266 S E R M O N XIII.

both privy to and observant of our most concealed Iniquities, since he is able to see further into them, than the Sinner himself that commits them. And thus much concerning the first Reason, proving that God observes the most secret Passages of our Lives because he governs them, and that both by discovering, by preventing, and by directing them to his own Ends.

II. Reason proving the same is, because he gives Laws to regulate the most secret Passages of our Lives, and therefore he must needs know and observe them. 'Tis absurd for any Governor to impose Laws upon Men in respect of those Actions, which cannot come under his Knowledge. Hereupon all human Laws tend only to the Regulation of the outward Man, and proceeds no further. But God extends his Law to the most secret Behaviour of Men, even to the Thoughts. Hence our Saviour interprets the Lust of the Heart, and the first Motions thereof to Uncleanness to be Adultery, v *Mat.* v. 28. Hence also the *word or law of God* is said in the iv *Hebr.* v. 12. *to be quick and powerful, and a discourser of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* And in the iii *Hebr.* v. 12. *the Spirit of God commands them not to entertain an evil heart of unbelief, nor so much as in their desires to depart from the living God.* If God took no notice of secret Unbelief, if he did not know or regard all the private

private Excursions of the Mind to sin, it were vain and fruitless to limit them by a Law. But since he has set a Law even to these also ; since he does not only restrain our secret Actions, but even our Thoughts and Desires, we may very well collect that all these are in his view, that he evidently beholds and searches them out, and that his Knowledge is not shorter than his Commands.

III. The third Reason is, because he will judge the most secret Passages of our Lives, therefore they are manifest to him. Knowledge is so requisite to Judgment, that our earthly Judges cannot judge rightly in Matters that they do not know: Hence *Job*, to shew how uprightly he judged, said that *he searched out the Cause that he knew not*, xxix *Job*, v. 16. implying that it was impossible for him otherwise to award a righteous Sentence. Justice indeed is pictured blind, not because it is to be without the Eye of Knowledge, but the Eye of Partiality. Now shall not God that is the Judge of all the Earth do right? shall he condemn and punish Men for such Sins as he knows not whether they have committed or not? Certain it is, that he Judges Men for secret Sin, therefore it is also certain that he knows them. In the xi Eccles. v. 9. *Solomon* says of the voluptuous Man, that for the Ways of his Heart, which are his secret and his hidden Ways, God will bring him to Judgment:

268 S E R M O N XIII.

ment: And in the xii Eccles. v, 14. It is said, *that God shall bring every work into Judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil*, and no wonder, since there is not so much as the least rising of the Heart to Sin but he views it; no circumstance so inconsiderable to our apprehensions, but he ponders it: he does, as it were, severely winnow every Action, and discerns that which is good in it, from that which is vile and sinful. Now there are two Seasons wherein God will judge Men for their secret Sins. First, In this Life, wherein he often gives Sinners a foretaste of what he intends to do in the future: And though he does reserve the whole Weight of his Judgment till after Death, yet he frequently dispenses some Strokes of it, by way of Earnest before. Because, not only Men's Desires but also their Belief, is chiefly satisfied by things present; wherefore, God sometimes follows secret Sins with present Judgment. When *Moses* declared the Law of God to *Israel*, and withal denounced Punishments to the Disobedient, he applies himself especially to those that were guilty of secret Disobedience, and lest they should rid themselves of the Fear of those Punishments, by looking upon them as future and remote, he shews how dreadfully God intends to deal with such Sinners even in this Life. xxix *Deuter.* v. 18, 19, 20, 21. Here we see Sin was very secret shut up in the private Reasonings

sonings and Debates of the Mind, but God fetches the Sinner out, and purges him, with present temporal Judgment; for as it appears from the foregoing Chapter, the Curses here mentioned, were chiefly such as touched Men in their Life, their Estate, and outward Relations. Such is the irrational Atheism of most Men, that although they have no thought, and consequently no fears of Hell, yet they accordingly dread temporal Affliction. Like a Child that does not so much fear the Loss of his Life, as the Loss of his Apple. Let such Men know, that it is very propable that by their secret Sins they may bring down the Curse of God upon themselves in this World; and although their Hell be compleated hereafter, they may begin it here. Whence is it that some Men are so strangely blasted in their Parts, and Preferment, but from some hidden Sin that rots and destroys all: Whence is it that many large Estates do undiscernedly shrivel away and come to nothing, but perhaps from the Guilt of some secret Extortion, Perjury, or the like, that lies fretting and eating out the very Bowels of them. I do not speak this universally, nor affirm that this is always the Cause of these Miseries, but 'tis to be feared that it is very often so.

2. The second Season wherein God judges the secret Passages of our Sins, is at the Day of Judgment. In respect of which our Saviour says, that *there is nothing hid but shall be made*

made manifest, xii *Luke*, v. 2. A Thief or a Murderer may carry on his Villainy undisclosed for many Years, but the Day of his Tryal will discover all: In the vii *Dan.* v. 10. It is said, *the Judgment was set and the Books were opened.* By the Books is meant the Knowledge of God, in which all Things are kept as durably and distinctly as if they were registered in a Book. Then God will open this Book of his Knowledge, and read all those hidden Passages that are writ in it in the audience of all the World. And this is one Reason why he permits so many heinous Impieties to be concealed here on Earth, because he intends to dignify that Day with the Revelation of them.

And thus much concerning the first Sort of Reasons, which prove, that it is so, that God knows and observes the secret Passages of our Lives. I proceed now to the second Sort of Reasons, that prove *whence* it is that God thus knows them. Now these Proofs are very different: For the first proves, That God knows these things by way of connexion, that is, by those Acts of God, which are always enjoined with Knowledge, as his governing, giving Laws, and Judging: But now these latter Reasons prove, that he observes all hidden Things from that which is the Cause of such Observations.

1. And the first Reason shall be drawn from God's Omniscience, or his Power of knowing
all

all Things: from whence it follows, that nothing can be hid from him; and this is that Light which no Man can keep off, any more than he can in the opening hinder the Day from shining upon him; it is a Light shining in every dark Place: As it has no obscurity it self, so it permits nothing else to lye obscure: And that it is universal and infinite, appears from this, because otherwise it would not bear a full Proportion to the rest of God's Perfections. Now in respect of this, it is said in the xv Prov. v. 3. *The eyes of the lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* And in the second of the Chron. xvi, 9. *The eyes of the lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.* And in the xxviii Job, v. 4. It is said of God, *that he looketh to the Ends of the Earth, and seeth under the whole heavens.* How vain therefore is the Thought of these Men that attempt Sin upon confidence of Privacy, that do, as it were, dig deep to hide their Counsel from the Lord. O that such would but read, and consider that Text in the iv Heb. v. 13. *all Things are naked and open before the Eyes of him with whom we have to do:* Now to behold a Thing as naked, implies the greatest Evidence and Discovery. It is also said, that *Secret things belong unto the Lord,* xxix Deut. v. 29. which, as also the forementioned Places, are only so many Expressions of God's infinitely comprehensive Knowledge, from hence therefore

therefore we may clearly deduce what we do intend. If the Perfection of God's Nature engages him to know all things, he must also *actually* know all things, and if he actually discerns all things, he must also discern all secret things; and if he is acquainted with all Secrets, he must also behold and observe the secret Passages of our Lives, which of all other secret Things are the most considerable.

2. The said Reason may be drawn from God's intimate Presence to the Nature and Being of all Things, from whence is also inferred his Knowledge of them : For, since there is no real Distinction between the Being and Knowledge of God, but only in the Manner of our Conceptions ; it follows, that where he is present, in respect of his Being, he must be also present in respect of his Knowledge. But now the Being of God is diffus'd through the whole and every part of the Universe, as the Soul insinuates itself into all the Members of the Body : not that God is thus present to all the World, by way of Identity with it (as some profane Philosophers have affirmed, who, in a literal Sense, may be said to have known no God but the World) but he is present with it, by way of nearness and inward proximity to it. Without which, the Creature could not derive continual Influence from him for the upholding of its Being, but must of Necessity fall back into its first Nothing. From this univer-
sal

sal Presence of God, the Scripture often proves the Universality of his Knowledge : in the 23d of *Jerem. v. 24*, God thus argues himself, *Can any one hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him*, saith the Lord ? Why ! whence is it so impossible to avoid God's Sight ? that which follows proves it, *Do not I fill Heaven and Earth ?* saith the Lord. God's filling Heaven and Earth, that is, his being present every where, proves also, that there can be no Place hidden from him, but that he likewise sees every where. *David* also in this cxxxix Psal. where the Text is, proves God's infinite Discernment of all Things, by the same Argument. He had said, that God *compassed his paths and knows all his ways*, but what was the Reason that convinced him of this ? he sets it down in the 7th and 8th Verses, *whether shall I flee from thy presence ? if I ascend up into heaven thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell behold thou art there.* He that always stands by us, must needs see and observe what we do ; wherefore, if the Sinner would act his Sin out of God's Knowledge, let him first endeavour to go out of his Presence, which he is no more able to do, than to go out of his own Being. And thus much concerning the Reasons proving the Point, I now proceed to Application.

If it is thus certain, that God takes strict Notice of the most secret Passages of our Lives ; both because he over-rules them, and prescribes

*

T

Laws

Laws to them, and judges them ; and also because that his Omniscience, and Omnipotence, then, in the first Place, it may afford,

1. A Use of Conviction, to convince all presumptuous Sinners of the Atheism of their Hearts. I know the Proof of this Point that God sees in secret, may seem to have been superstitions ; since the general Vogue of the World is ready, not only to meet but even to prevent us in their acknowledgment of God's all-seeing Eye : But if we look through Men's Professions and trace their Lives, we shall find that they do not really believe any such thing. For were we fully convinced that the just God that declares himself a most certain punisher of Sin, did also most certainly know Sin, we should not dare to commit it presumptuously before him. Experience, the strongest Argument, shows us the contrary in the ordinary Passages of our Lives. A very child will forbear to offend not only before his Father, but before such an one from whom his Father may come to know it. The reason is, because all preservations, if real, do naturally engage a Man to Actions suitable to those Preservations. As for Example, Had you a thorough perswasion upon your Heart that God saw you when you were attempting any vile Sin, the very Thought of this would beget such a Reverence and a Dread upon your Spirits, as you could not venture to commit if to gain a World :

For

For we see such Thoughts cast an awe upon us, even in our deportment before Men. Hence the Fool, that is the wicked Man, is said, to say in his Heart, *That there is no God*, because he does act in his Life, as if he thought there was none. In like manner the presuming Sinner may be said to deny that God sees and observes all his Actions, because he behaves himself so, as if he were really perswaded that God did not observe them: Therefore whosoever thou art, that art a presumptuous Offender, setting aside all thy spurious Words, when thou dost resolve upon any Sin, thou dost either believe that God sees thee or that he does not. To believe he does not, is to deny him to be God: To believe he sees thee and yet to commit the Sin, is to affront him to his Face; to bid open defiance to him, and to cast that unwisely contempt upon him, that the most audacious and impudent Offender dares not offer to his earthly Magistrate; wherefore if, from thy Heart, thou dost acknowledge God's all-seeing Eye, cease from Sin; otherwise to any reasonable Judgment thou dost really deny it, and in spite of all thy fair Speeches art truly an Atheist. For Deeds always overbalance Words, and down-right Practice speaks the Mind more plainly than the fairest Profession.

2d Use. It speaks Terror to all secret Sinners: God sees and observes them in all their Secretcies; he spies out all their private Haunts, and

T 2

their

their fly recourses to their beloved Sin. Let such Men consider how unwilling they would be that Men should know of their concealed Villainies, of what they act by themselves : surely they would rather forfeit their Lives and all that was near unto them, than their secret Sins should be divulged, and then let them know that God sees them, and that it was better that they were known to all the World, than they so fear, than to him. For he sees more filth in them, than one of the most discerning and carping Judgment, can find in the Faults of his Adversary : and he does more detest them than the most holy and upright Man can do the most grossest and notorious Sin. Let them also consider that the greatest ground of all their Sins, which is Secrecy, is by God's all-seeing Eye, taken away. For assuredly the confidence of Concealment, is the greatest inducement for an Hypocrite to commit the vilest Sins. *Ixiv Psalm. v. 5. They encourage themselves in an evil matter, they say who shall see them ? And thus confidence of Secrecy gave them confidence in Sin.* But certainly it is an ill Argument, because Sinners do not see God, to conclude therefore, that God does not see them ; like the foolish Bird hiding his Head in a hole, thinks himself secure from the View of the Fowler, because the Fowler is not in his View. O how miserably are such Sinners deceived in the vain Prop of a false Confidence :
in

in the xc. Psal. v. 8. *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.* As God lifts up the Light of his Countenance upon the Godly, to refresh and comfort them, so he does also upon secret Sinners to discover and to amaze them. It is said of the secret Adulterers in the xxiv Job. v. 16, 17. *They know not the light, for the morning is to them as the shadow of death.* How then will they bear the Light of God's Countenance, which will cast the Shadow of Death in their Faces in a much more dreadful manner: in the same Verse, it is said, *if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death:* but the All-seeing God knows them: O the Fear, the Shame, and Confusion that is in the Mind of a discovered Sinner. And let such an unclean Person know, that he had better act his Impurity in the Sight of his reverend Parents, and of a severe Magistrate, than under the observing Eye of a just and holy God, before whom secret Sins are not secret, but open and revealed. Yet such as secrete to Men we may rank into two Sorts, both of which God perfectly knows.

I. Such as are wholly transacted in the Mind, without the Service and Ministration of the Body, and these are the Sins of our Thoughts and Desires, which are lock'd up from the Knowledge of Men or Angels. No Court of human Judicature pretends to judge

or punish the Thoughts, and Intentions: they are in a peculiar Manner reserved for the Jurisdiction of the Court of Heaven, which alone is able to examine and find them out. Now there is no Act of Man so quick as his Thoughts: which, in this, resembles the Angelical Nature, that they are swift and invisible. Let the gross acting Sinner act as fast as he can, yet the thinking Sinner, will have the start and advantage of him, and Sin an hundred Thoughts before he shall perform one sinful Action. O the infinite Multitudes of impure Thoughts in a polluted Mind, like swarms of Flies upon a Carcass, continually sucking and drawing in Corruption. Now God has a more than ordinary respect to Men's Thoughts; hence God cries out of his People in the iv *Jerem.* v. 14. *How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* The greatest Wickedness and that which is the most odious to God, is the Wickedness of the Heart, and this consists in Pollution of the Thoughts and Desires. Nay, God does so much hate the sinfulness of these, that sometimes he expresses the whole work of Conversion by the Renovation and Change of the Thoughts, in the lv of *Isaiah*, v. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him.* But was it God's Intentions only to restrain these, and in the mean time

to

to give him Liberty in his sinful Actions? No: but the forsaking of one, implies the leaving of the other; as the greater Duty includes the less: He that will not so much as indulge himself in an evil Thought, will much less venture upon the gross Commission of Sin. Now God oftentimes judges of the State and Condition of a Man from the Purity or Impurity of his Thoughts, and that upon these Reasons.

1. Because the Sin of the Thoughts and Desires is most spiritual, and consequently most opposite to the Nature of God: spiritual Wickedness, is properly contrary to spiritual Holiness, and it is that by vertue whereof Satan has strongest Possession of the Soul, as being that wherein most Men resemble him, who being destitute of a Body is not capable of corporal fleshly Sins: hence in the *vi Ephes.* v. 12. we have the vileness of his Nature expressed by *spiritual Wickedness* in heavenly Places. Now, as there is nothing almost so evident in itself, as by the Advantage of Contraries, so we may see how odious spiritual Sin is to God, in that spiritual Duty is so acceptable. God does not so much command us to serve him, as to serve him in Spirit and Truth. In all religious Duties the Voice of God is, *So give me thy Heart.* To find a Sacrifice without an Heart, was always accounted a thing prodigious, To bring our Bodies to Church, and

leave our Thoughts at home; this is most detestable before God. To lift up our Eyes to Heaven in Prayer, and yet to fix our Desires upon the Earth, O this his Soul hates. As God drew a resemblance of himself upon the whole Man, so, in a more lively manner, he imprinted it on the Mind. Now one sinful Thought is able to slur this Image of God upon the Soul: one corrupt Desire is able to divest the Soul of all its native Innocence and Purity. This certainly must be true, that that which tends to corrupt the best and most worthy Part of Man, must needs be the worst, and greatest Corruption. But all, even the Heathens will acknowledge, that a Man's Mind is his better part: and Scripture and Experience tell us, that evil Thoughts and Desires defile the Mind: therefore, we should endeavour, in the first Place, the Sanctification and Regulation of these. Moral Philosophy tells us, that external Actions are not morally Good or Evil of themselves, but by participation of the Good and Evil that is in the Acts of the Will, by which they are commanded. We are not angry with the Hand that strikes us, but with the evil Intention that guided the Hand: nor with the Tongue that curses us, but with the vile Disposition of the Mind that bid it curse. God commanded *David* to cut off the Sin of *Saul*, in the ii *Sam.* 21, v. 1. and he commanded *Jehu* to slay the Posterity of

of *Ahab*. The outward Action is here the same: whence then was *David's* Action pleasing to God, and *Jehu's* reputed Murder. i *Hosea*. v. 4. But from the defence of their Thoughts and Intentions? *David* did it with an intent to obey God, and *Jehu* with a Design of private Revenge. 'Tis most just therefore that God should judge of the whole Man, by his Thoughts and Desires, since from these are the *Issues of Life and Death*.

2. He Judges a Man by these, because his Actions and Practice may be over-ruled, but Thoughts and Desires are the natural and genuine Offspring of the Soul. Experience tells us, that we have not that Command and Dominion over our Thoughts that we have over our Actions, they admit neither of Order nor Limitation, but are the continual incessant bubbling up of Sin out of the Mind: For we may observe, that those Acts that may immediately result from the Faculty, without the interceding Command of the Will, are scarcely controlled by it. How will the unruly Imaginations of a vain Fancy, range and wander in spight of all the Dictates and Commands of Reason: There is nothing more easy or usual than for one to counterfeit his Behaviour. A Man may cause, that nothing but Love and Kindness shall appear in his Actions, when in his Thoughts he breaths Cruelty and Murder. The Hypocrite in the outward Part of the
most

most holy Duty may make as fine and specious a Show as the best, when there is nothing but Sin and Rottenness in his Heart. xxxiii Jere. v. 31. *They sit before thee as my people, and they bear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love but their heart goeth after their covetousness.* Here we see they had nothing so frequent in their Words and outward Services as the Worship of God, and nothing so remote from their Desires. But now in the Thoughts there is no dissimulation: what a Man is in these, that he is in truth and reality, the Smile is in its Thoughts, as in its retiring Room. Laying aside the Garb and Dress, in which it appeared upon the Stage of the World. Nay, although a Man had a full rule over his Thoughts, yet they must needs be free from Dissimulations, as not being capable of the Causes of it. That which makes Men dissemble, is a Fear of and a Desire to please the Eyes of Men: which we know cannot reach to the Thoughts. 'Tis therefore clear, that Sincerity does only reside, and consequently is only to be found in these: Hence we may observe, that *Christ*, in all his replies to the *Jews* and the *Pharisees*, did rather answer the inward Reasonings and Thoughts of their Mind, than the Questions they did propose. In the xiv *Ezek.* v. 3, 4. we have Men addressing themselves to God in the greatest Shew of Salvation that might be, yet he professes that

that he will not answer them according to those Pretences, but according to the Idols they had set up in their Hearts. A Man, by reason of his Concernments and Interest in the World, what for fear of this Punishment and Hope of that Preferment, will cast himself into such a Mold, as he shall be really nothing less than what he does appear to be; his Words, Actions, and outward Carriage shall bear no correspondence with his Intentions. The covetous Man, in his Mind, can lay heap upon heap; and what he cannot gain by his Endeavours, he will make up by his Thoughts. The ambitious Man will think, over all the Applauses and Greatness of the World, and in the Closet of his Mind erect to himself the Idol of his own Excellencies, and fall down and worship it. The revengeful Person, though Fear will not let him act his Revenge, yet in his Thoughts he will stab and trample upon his Brother. The lascivious Wretch, though Shame will not let him execute his Sin, yet he will feed his corrupt Fancy with unclean Imaginations. In all these Passages Men being secure from the View of others, behave themselves according to the free Genius and Inclination of their Nature. But God knows all these silent Workings: he knows them and abhors them: and that he does know them, he will make it appear at that Day when he shall also make others know them: and when the

Secrets

284 S E R M O N XIII.

Secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. O what black Stories will be told at the Day of Judgment of Men's Thoughts?

2. The said Sort of secret Sins are such as are not only transacted in the Mind, but also by the Body, yet are covered and kept close from the View of Men. Such was *David's Sin* in the Matter of *Uriah*. *ii Sam. xii v. 12.* God says to him, *thou didst this thing secretly.* Such was *Cain's Murder* of his Brother. Such was the Theft of *Achan*; *there were no standers by*, conscious to it, it was not done before spectators. Now certainly a Sinner should thus argue, If I cannot hide my secret sinful Thoughts and Desires from God, how much less shall I be able to conceal my Actions be they ever so private. When Satan, Secrecy, and Opportunity, all of them great Tempters, shall tempt you to sin, consider that you have still this Company with you, a Conscience that will accuse you, and a God that will judge you. And is there any Man so irrational as to commit a Robbery in the Sight of his Accuser? to do a Felony before his Judge? What Reason will not suffer us to do before Men, shall not Reason and Religion keep us from committing before God: Thou mayest wrong and defraud thy Neighbour in secret, *Gen. iv. v. 10. but the Stone shall cry out of the Wall, and the beam out of the timber shall accuse thee.* Thou mayest kill and murder, and none behold thee, *but the Voice of thy brother's*

ther's blood shall cry to God from the ground that receives it. I may here speak to the secret Sinner in the Words of an holy Author; Let him but find some corner where God may not see him, and then let him sin as he pleases. The Adulterer in the forementioned place of Job, is *said to wait for the twilight*: But here we find in this Psalm, *that the darkness and light are both alike to God.* The drunkard will *presume to be drunk in the night.* i. Theft. c. v. ver. 7. but here we read *that the darkness hideth not from God, but the night shineth as the day.* No Sins can be covered, but such as God himself shall be pleased to cover within the Righteousness of his own Son: He that can see in secret, and when thou shuttest thy Door behold thee praying in thy Closet, can as easily see thee when thou art sinning there, and as for private duty he will reward, so for secret Sin he will punish thee openly either in this World or in another. And therefore it were good for such kind of Sinners to consider that while their Door is thus shut, the Gates of Hell stand open.

3. As it speaks Terror to all secret Sinners, so it speaks no less Comfort to all sincere-hearted Christians. The same Sun-rising and break of Day that terrifies the Robber, is a Comfort to the honest Traveller: Thou that art sincere, God sees that sincerity in thee that others cannot discern; yea, he often sees more
sincerity

sincerity in thy Heart, than thou canst discern thy self. This may uphold the drooping Spirits of a disconsolate Soul, when the black Mouths of Men, steeled with Ignorance and Prejudice, shall be opened in hard Speeches against him. For indeed now a-days, when a Man cannot find fault with his Brother's outward Conversation, which only he can behold, he will censure him in respect of Spirituals, which no Man can discern, any more than I can know what is in a Man's Mind by the Colour of his Cloaths. Such Men speak as if God did not only make them partake of his Mercies, but also of his Prerogative. And when it should be their work to resemble God in Holiness, they arrogantly pretend to be like him in Omniscience. How severely, though blindly, do they judge of Men's Hearts? Such a Man is profane, another is carnal, and a meer Moralist, another proud, and as to the bent and frame of his Spirit, a Contemner of Religion: But here the sincere Soul may comfort itself, when with one Eye it can reflect upon its own Integrity, and with the other upon God's infinite infallible Knowledge, and say, indeed, Men charge me thus and thus, as False-hearted and an Hypocrite, but *my God* knows otherwise. This, I say, may set thee above the Calumnies of unreasonable Men; and make thee ride upon the Necks of thy Accusers. And as *Daniel*, by trusting in his God, was secure from the
Mouths

Mouths of the Lions; so, thou, by acting Faith upon, and drawing Comfort from God's Omniscience, may'st defy the more cruel Mouths of thy Reproachers. When a Man is accused of Treason to his Prince, and knows that his Prince is fully assured of his Innocence, he will laugh all such Accusations to Scorn. 'Tis thus with God and a sincere Heart: In the midst of all Slanders, he will own thee for Innocent; as he did *Job*, when his Friends, with much specious Piety, charged him with Hypocrisy. Wherefore commit thy Way to the All-seeing God, to that God that is acquainted with all thy Ways: that sees thy goings out and thy comings in, and continually goes in and out before thee, and will one Day testify and set his Seal to thy Integrity. Comfort thy self in the Considerations of his Omniscience, from whence it is, that God judgeth not as Man judgeth, but judges righteous Judgment. And hold fast thy Integrity that lies secret in the Heart, whose Praise is of God, and not of Man.

S E R-

SERMON XIV.

ECCLESIASTES vii. v. 10.

Say not thou, what is the Cause that former days were better than these; for thou dost not Enquire wisely concerning this.

IN the Days of Solomon, when Jerusalem was the Glory of the whole Earth; when it flourish'd as the Metropolis not only of Religion, but of the Riches of the World; when Gold was made as common as Silver, and Silver as the Stones of the Street, (so that its Inhabitants might even tread and trample upon that, which so much commanded the Hearts of others;) when their Exchequer was full, and their fleets at Ophir; when Religion was establish'd, and the changing *ambulatory Tabernacle* fixed into a *standing Temple*, and all crowned with a Peace under Solomon after the Afflictions and Wars of David; when they flowed with *Plenty*, and were governed with *Wisdom*: Yet, after all, the Text here gives
us

us a clear Intimation, that *Plenty* pass'd into *Surfeit*, *Fullness* into *Loathing*, *Loathing* into *Discontent*, and that (as it always happens) into *Complaints of the Times*, viz. That *former Days were better than these*.

When yet, upon a small Reflection backward, we have the *Calendar* of the former Times read, with the *bloody House of Saul*, with the Slaughter of the *Priests*, and with the Rebellions of *Shebah* and *Abshalom*; nothing but Tumults, Changes, and Vicissitudes; and yet, in the Verdict of Folly and Faction, present Enjoyments did so *far endear* former Calamities, as to give them the Preheminence in the Comparison.

But we see, there may be *Folly* even in *Israel*; and if they were all of this mind, *Solomon* may justly seem to have monopolized all the Wisdom to himself. We have him here chastising the Sottishness of this Enquiry: indeed the fittest Person to encounter this Exception, as being a King, and so able to controul, being a Preacher and so able to confute it; furnish'd with *Power* for the one, and with *Wisdom* for the other.

This is therefore the Design of the Words, either to satisfy or silence this malecontented Enquiry, and supposing it to carry in it, its own Confutation; he confutes it not by Argument but Reproof; not as a doubtful Problem, but as a foolish Question; and certainly the

* U

Case

Case must needs be carry'd, where the *Fool* makes the Question, and the *wisest of Men* gives the Answer.

The Matter in Controversy is, the Preheminence of the former Times above the Present; when we must observe, that though the Words run in the Form of a Question, yet they include a positive Assertion, and a downright Censure.

The Enquiry being determined before it was proposed, now the Charge of Folly here laid upon it, may relate to the Supposition upon which it is founded in a threefold Respect, *viz.*

I. Of a peremptory Negation, as a Thing absolutely to be denied that former Times are better than the following.

II. As of a Case very disputable, whether they are so or no.

III. As admitting the Supposition for two, that really they are better, and so bear away the Preheminence.

Yet in every one of these three most different Respects, this Enquiry ought to be exploded as absurd, impertinent, and irrational.

I. And

1. And first of all, That it is ridiculous, to ask, why former Times are better than the Present, if really they are not better, and so the very Supposition itself proves false ; this is too *apparently* manifest to be Matter of Dispute, and if it is false, we shall endeavour to prove and evince in the ensuing Discourse ; but before I enter upon the Proof of it, this one Observation must be premised.

That Time is said to be good or bad, not from any such Quality inherent in itself, but by external Denomination from the Nature of those Things, that are and do subsist in such a Space of Time. Time is the great *Vehicle* of Nature, not only for its swift Passage and Career, but because it carries in it the System of the World, from one Stage and Period of Duration to another.

Now the World may be considered either in its natural or moral Perfections. Some hold that for the former, there is a continual Diminution, and an insensible Decay in Nature, Things growing less and less, the very Powers and Faculties of them being weakened and shrunk ; and the *Vital Spirit*, or *humidum Radicale* that God and Nature first infused into the great Body of the Universe being much exhausted, so that now, in every following Age, the Lamps of Heaven burn dimmer and dimmer, till, at length, they

292 S E R M O N XIV.

dwindle into Nothing, and so go out of themselves.

But, that this cannot be so, is clear from these Reasons. 1st. Because the ancientest Histories generally describe Things in the same posture heretofore that we find them now. 2d. That admitting the least and most undiscernable Degree of Diminution, even to but one Remove from none at all, the World, in the Space of six thousand Years, which date it almost now bears, by the Continuance but of that small Proportion of Change, would have sunk even to nothing, or the smallness of an Atome. 3d. This will make the final Annihilation of the World a mere effect of Nature, and not of God's supernatural Power, and so the Consequent of it is Irreligious.

Wherefore it being *sure* that the whole Fa-
brick of the World stands in the same Vigour
and Perfection of Nature, which it had at first,
we come next to that in which we are now
most concerned, to see whether or no it be
impaired and sunk in its *moral* Perfections, and
what is the Consequent of that in Political.

We have here an Aphorism of *Horace* much
inculcated. *Terra malos homines nunc educat
atque Pufillos.* But Poetry never yet went for
Argument: and, *perhaps*, he might speak this,
being *conscious* of his own Manners, and re-
flecting upon his own Stature. But that in
the

the Descent of succeeding Generations, the following are not still the Worse I thus evince.

1. By Reason: Because there were the same Objects to work upon Men, and the same Dispositions and Inclinations in Men to be wrought upon, before, that there are now. All the Affairs of the World are the Births, and Issue of Men's Actions; and all Actions come from the meeting and collision of Faculties with suitable Objects. There were then, the same Incentives of Desire on the one side, the same Attractiveness in Riches, the same Relish in Sovereignty, the same Temptation in Beauty, the same Delicacy in Meats and Taste in *Wines*; and, on the other side, there were the same Appetites of Covetousness and Ambition, the same Fuel of Lust and Intemperance.

And these are the Wheels upon which the whole visible Scene of Affairs, Ethick and Politick turns and depends. The Business of the World is Imitation, and that which we call Novelty, is nothing but Repetition. The Figure and Motion of the World is circular, and Experience no less than Mathematicks will evince, that as it turns round, the same Part must be often in the same Place: One Age indeed goes before another: But Precedency is not always Preheminence, and it is not unusual for a Worse to go before a Better, and for the

Servant to ride before and lead the Way to his Master.

2. But 2dly, The same may be proved by History, and the Records of Antiquity; and He who would give it the utmost Proof that it is capable of *from this* Topick, must speak Volumes, and preach Libraries, bring a Century within a Line, and an Age into every Period. But what need we go any further than the noblest and yet the nearest Piece of Antiquity, the Book of *Moses*.

Is the Wickedness of the old World forgot, that we do so aggravate the Tempest of this? Was it destroyed with Waters of Oblivion? and has the Deluge clean overwhelm'd and sunk itself? In those Days there were Giants in Sin, as well as Sinners of the first Magnitude, and of the largest Size and Proportion.

And to take the World in a lower Epocha, what After-age could exceed the Lust of the Sodomites, the *Idolatry* and *Tyranny* of the *Ægyptians*, the fickle Levity of the *Græcians*? and that monstrous Mixture of all Baseness in the Roman *Nero's*, *Calligula's*, and *Domitian's Emperers* of the *World*, and *Slaves* to their *Vice*?

And for the very State of *Israel*, in which this envious Enquiry was first commenc'd, was that worse in *Canaan*, under the Shadow and Protection of a native Royalty, than under the old

old Servitude and Tyranny of *Ægypt*? Was their present Condition so bad, that while *Solomon* was courting *Pharoah's* Daughter they should again court his *Yoak*? woe their old Slavery, and solicit a Match with their former Bondage. Was it so delightful a Condition, to feed *Pharoah's* Cattle, and to want Straw themselves? instead of one Prince, to have many Task-masters? and to pay Excise with their Backs to maintain the Tyrant's Janizaries, and to feed their Tormentors? But, it seems, being in a Land flowing with Honey, they were cloyed with that, and so loathing the *Honey*, they grew in Love with the Sting.

But to bring the Subject to our own Doors, if we would be convinced that former Ages are not always better than the following, I suppose we need not much wrack our Memories for a Proof from Experience.

I conceive the State of the Christian Church also may come within the Compass of our present Discourse. Take it in its Infancy, and with the Properties of Infancy, it was weak and naked, vexed with Poverty, torn with Persecution, and infested with Heresy. It began the Breach with *Simon Magus*, continued it with *Arrius*, *Nestorius*, *Eutyches* *Aerius*, some rending her Doctrine, some her Discipline; and, what are the Heresies that now trouble it, but new Editions of the Old with further Gloss and Enlargement? What is

Socinus but *Photinus* and *Pelagius* blended and joined together, in a third Composition? What are our Separatists and Purity-pretending Schismatics, but the tame Brood and Successors of the *Donatists*? only with this difference, that they had their Head-Quarters in *Meridie*, in the Southern Parts of the World, whereas ours seem to be derived to us from the *North*. These, I thought, had put it out of Dispute, that no succeeding Age of the Church could have been worse: and, I think, the Assertion might have stood firm, had not some late Instances of our own Age made it disputable.

But as for those, who clamour of the Corruptions of our present Church, and are so earnest to reduce us to the primitive Model: If they mean the primitive Truth, and not rather the primitive Nakedness of it only, we know this for *Doctrine* and *Discipline*, it is the very Transcript of Antiquity. But if their *Design* be to make us like the primitive Christians, by driving us into *Caves*, and *Holes*, and *Rocks*; to tear down Temples and to make the Sanctuary it self *fly for Refuge*; to bring *Beasts into Churches*, and to send *Churchmen* into *Dens*; at the same time to make Men Beggars and to take away Hospitals; it is but Reason to desire, that they would first begin and exemplify this Reformation in themselves; and, like the old Christians, with Want and
Poverty,

Poverty, wander about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins: Though, if they should, that is not presently a Sheep that wears the Skin, nor would the Sheep's cloathing change the Nature of the Wolf.

I conclude therefore, that all these pompous Declamations against the Evil of the present Times, set off by odious Comparisons with the former, are the Voice of Error and Envy, of the Worst of Judges, Malice and Mistake: Though I cannot wonder if those assert Affairs to be *out of order*, whose Interest and Desire it is to be once more *a Reforming*.

And thus much for the first Consideration of the Suppositions. As a *Thing false, and to be denied*, I shall now

II. In the second Place, remit a little of this, and take it in a lower respect; as a Case disputable, whether the *preceding* or *succeeding* Generations are to be preferr'd; and here I shall dispute the Matter on both Sides.

I. And first for Antiquity, and the former Ages, we may plead thus. Certainly every thing is purest in the Fountain and most untainted in the Original. The Dregs are still the most likely to settle in the Bottom, and to sink into the last Ages. The World cannot but be the Worse for wearing; and it must needs have contracted much Dross, when
at

298 S E R M O N XIV.

at the Last it cannot be purged but by an universal Fire.

Things are most fresh and fragrant in their Beginning. The First-born is the most Honourable, and it is Primogeniture that entitles to the Inheritance: 'Tis not present Possessions, but an early Pedigree, that gives Nobility.

The older the World grows, the more decrepid it must be: for Age bows the Body and so causes an Obliquity: Every Course of Time leaves its Mark behind it; and every Century adds a Wrinkle to the Face of Nature.

As for Knowledge, the former Age still teaches the latter; and which is likely to be most knowing, he that teaches or he that is taught? The best and most compendious Way of attaining Wisdom is, the Reading of Histories, but History speaks not of the present Time but of the former.

Besides, it was only the Beginning of Time that saw Men Innocent. Sin, like other Things, receives growth by Time, and improves by Continuance: And every succeeding Age, has the bad Example of one Age more than the former. The same Candle that refreshes when it is first light, smells and offends when it is going out.

In the Alphabet of Nature, it is only the first Letter that is flourished. In short, there is as much difference between the present and former Times, as there is between a Copy and an Original; that indeed may be fair, but this
only

only is authentick. And be a Copy never so exact, yet still it shines with a borrowed Perfection, and has but the low Praise of an Imitation: And this may be said in Behalf of the former Times.

2. But secondly, For the Preheminence of the succeeding Ages above the former, it may be disputed thus.

If the Honour be due to Antiquity, then certainly the present Age must claim it, for the World is now oldest, and therefore upon the very Right of Sincerity may challenge the Precedency; for certainly, the longer the World lasts, the Older it grows. And if Wisdom ought to be respected, we know, that it is the Offspring of Experience, and Experience the Child of Age, and Continuance.

In every Thing, and Action, it is not the Beginning, but the End that is regarded: It is still the Issue that crowns the Work, and the *Amen* that seals the *Petition*: The *Plaudite* is given to the *last Act*: And Christ reserved the *Best Wine* to conclude *the Feast*; nay, a fair Beginning would be but the Aggravation of a bad End.

And if we plead Original, we know that Sin is strongest in its Original; and we are taught whence to date that. The lightest Things float at the Top of Time, but if there be such a Thing as a golden Age, its Mass and Weight must

300 S E R M O N XIV.

must needs sink it to the Bottom and concluding Ages of the World.

By having the Histories of former Ages, we have all their Advantages by Way of Overplus, besides the proper Advantages of our own; and so standing upon their Shoulders, or rather upon their Heads, cannot but have the further Prospect.

Though the Flourish *begins the line*, yet it is the Period *that makes the Sins*. As for the Infirmities of Age, we confess that *Men* grow decrepid by Time, but *Mankind* does not. Policy, Arts, and Manufactures improve; and *Nature itself*, as well as others, cannot be an Artist, till it has *served its Time*.

And, in religious Matters, for the Church, we know that it is *Christ's Body*, and therefore its most natural, commending Property is *Growth*: but Growth is the Effect of Duration, and if it had had its greatest Perfection at the first, *Growth* would have been impossible.

Besides, we confess, that Prophecy, was a Thing appropriate to the first Days of the Church: but then it is not *Prophecy* spoken, but fulfilled; not the Promise made but performed, which conveys the Blessing; and though the giving of Prophecies were the *Glory* of the first Times, yet their Completion is the *Privilege* of the Latter.

But,

S E R M O N XIV. 301

But, do we not see all this while, that by thus ascribing the Preheminence to former Ages, we tacitly reflect a Reproach upon the great Maker and Governor of the Universe? for can Omnipotence be at a Stand? is God exhausted? and is Nature the only Thing which makes no Progress? God has made all Things in motion, and the Design of Motion is a further Perfection.

In some, it was the Fulness of Time which brought *Christ* into the World; Christianity was a Reserve for the *Last*: And it was the Beginning of Time which was infamous for Man's Fall and Ruin: So, in Scripture, they are called the *last Days* and the *Ends of the World* which are ennobled with his Redemption.

But Lastly, If the following Ages were not the Best, whence is it, that the older Men grow, the more still they desire to live? — Now such things as these may be disputed in favour of the latter Times beyond the former.

Having here brought the Matter to this Poise, to this Equilibrium, that reflexive Enquiry in the Text concerning the Worth of former Times above the Present, is eminently unreasonable in these two Respects.

1. In respect of the Nature of the Thing itself; which we have seen is equally propendent to both Parts, and not discernable which way

way the Balance inclines ; and nothing can be more Irrational, than to be dogmatical in Things doubtful ; and to determine where *wise* Men only Dispute.

2. In respect of the Incompetence of any Man living to be judge in this Controversy : And he that is unfit to judge, I am sure is unable to decide. Now that Incompetence arises from this : That no Man can judge rightly of two Things, but by comparing them together, and compare them he cannot unless he exactly knew them both. But how can he know former Ages, unless, according to the Opinion of *Plato* or *Pythagoras*, he might exist and be alive so many Centuries before he was born ?

But you will reply, That he may know them by the Histories of those that writ of their own Times.

To this I answer, That History may be justly suspected partial ; and that Historians report the Vertues of their own Age, selected and abstracted from the *Vices* and *Defects* ; and if sometimes they mention the Vices also, (as they do) yet they only report the Smaller, that they may with less Suspicion conceal the Greater. Now it is an unequal Comparison to compare the select Vertues of one Age, with both the Vertues and the Vices of another.

History,

History, strip of Partiality, would be a poor thin meager Thing, and the Volume would shrink into the Index. *I conclude therefore*, that he who would decide this Controversy, whether the former or latter Times ought to have the Preheminence, by the Historians of those Times: He properly does this; He first calls a Man into Question, and then makes him judge in his own Cause, and at the best sees only by another's Eyes.

Come we now to the Third and last Ground.

3. That admitting this Supposition as true, that the former Ages are really the best, and to be preferred: Yet, still this querulous Reflection upon the Evil of the present Times, stands obnoxious to the same Charge of Folly: and, if it be condemned also, upon this Supposition, I see not where it can take Sanctuary: Now that it ought to be so, I demonstrate by these Reasons.

1. Because such Complaints have no efficacy to alter or remove the Cause of them: Thoughts and Words alter not the State of Things. The Rage and Expostulations of Discontent, are like a *Thunder* without a *Thunder-bolt*, they vanish and expire into Noise and Nothing; and, like a Woman, are only loud and weak.

States are not altered, nor Governments changed, because such an one is discontented, and tells

tells us so in a Sermon, or writes it in a Book, and so prints himself a Fool. Sad, undoubtedly, were our Case, should God be angry with a Nation as often as a Preacher is pleased to be passionate, and to call his Distemper the Word of God.

A Quill is but a weak Thing to contest with a Scepter ; and a satirical Remonstrance to stand before a Sword of Justice. The Laws will not be *worded* out of their Course. The Wheel will go on, though the Fly sits and flutters and buzzes upon it.

It would be well, if such Persons would take *Luther's* Advice to *Melancthon*, and be persuaded to leave off to govern the World, and not to *frame* new *Politick* Ideas ; not to raise *Models of State*, and *Holy Common Wealths*, in their little *discontented* Closets ; nor to arraign a Council before a Conventicle ; and being stript of their Arms, to fly to Revelation ; and when they cannot *effect*, at least *Prophecy* a Change.

Though there be a Lyon, a Bull, a venomous Serpent and a fiery Scorpion in the *Zodiack* ; yet, still the Sun holds on his Way, goes through them all, brings the Year about, finishes his Course, shines, and is glorious in spite of such Opposition. The maunderings of Discontent are like the Voice and Behaviour of a Swine, who when he feels it Rain, runs grumbling about, and, by that, indeed, discovers

covers his Nature, *but* does not avoid the Storm.

2. Such Complaints of the Evil of the Times are irrational, because they only quicken the Smart and add to the Pressure. Such querulous Invectives against a standing Government, are like a Stone flung at a marble Pillar, which not only makes no Impression upon that, but rebounds and hits the flinger in the Face. Discontent *burns* only that Breast in which it boils; and, when it is not contented to be hot within, but must boil over in unruly, unwarrantable Expressions to avoid the Heat, it wisely takes refuge in the Fire: Hence, when the Sea swells and rages, we say not improperly, that the Sea itself is troubled.

Submission is that which either removes or lightens the Burden. Giving Way, either avoids or eludes the Blow: And where an Enemy, or an Affliction is too strong, Patience is the best Defence.

And herein does the admirable Wisdom of God appear, in modelling the great Oeconomy of the World, so uniting publick and private Advantages, that those Affections and Dispositions of Mind, that are most conducive to the Safety of Government and Society, are also most advantageous to every Man in his own personal Capacity: For, does not an humble compliant Subjection at the same time strengthen the Hands of the Magistrate, and

*

X

blefs

blefs the Perfon that has it with the Privileges of Quiet and Content. He who has Content, has that for which others would be Great; He both fecures and enjoys himfelf: but, on the contrary; He that frets and fumes and is angry, he raifes Tumults abroad, and feels the fame within: As he that cries, and roars, and makes a Noife, firft *binders* his own Sleep, before he breaks the Reft of Others: And it is not unusual, to fee a Fire fometimes ftifled and extinguifhed in its own Smoak.

In fhort, Difcontent is as Laborious, as Ufelefs: And He who will Rebel, muft reckon upon the Coft and Conduct of an Army; and endure the Trouble of *Watching*, as well as ufe the Diffimulation of *Praying*.

3. Thirdly and laftly, Thefe cenforious Complaints of the Evil of the Times are Irrational, becaufe the juft Caufe of them is refolvable into our Selves. 'Tis not the Times that debauch Men, but Men that derive and rabb a Contagion upon the Time: And it is ftill the Liquor that firft taints and infects the Veffel.

Time is harmlefs, it paffes on, and meddles with none; the Sun riles, the Year proceeds, and the Seasons return, according to the Decrees of Nature, and the inviolate Conftancy of a perpetual Courfe. And is it not Irrational for a Man to caft the Errors of his Choice, upon

upon the Necessity of Fate? or to complain that Men *speak* low, because his Hearing is decayed? and to utter Satires and Declamations against those Times which his own Vice has made bad? and, like *Amnon*, defile his Sister and then loath her for the Wrong he did her.

Thus we use to say, It is the Room that Smoaks, when indeed it is the Fire which is in the Room: And it is still the Fault of the common Banter or Way of Speaking, to disjoin the Accusation and the Crime, and to change a Land with the Vices of its Inhabitants.

But I should think, that it might not be so difficult a Thing to find out a Way both to remedy the Complaint, and to remove the Cause of it. For, let but the Prodigal confine himself, and measure his Expences by his own Abilities and not by another's Books: Let him Trust himself more, and others Less: Let Ministers cease to call Faction Religion, to lift up their Voice too much like a Trumpet, and in *Petitions for Peace*, declare for War: And, let not others think themselves *wronged*, if they be not revenged: Let no Man be forced to buy what he has already earned; to pay for his Wages, and to lay down new Sums for the Price of his Blood and the just Merit of his Service. And then, certainly, there will be no Cause to prefer *former Ages* before the

308 S E R M O N XIV.

Present. But if Men will extravagantly plunge themselves in Debt, and then rail and cry out of bad Times, because they are Arrested: If the Gallant will put all upon *his Back*, and then exclaim against the Government because he has nothing for his Belly: If Men will think themselves bound to preach the Nation all on Fire, and being stopp'd in their attempt, cry out of Persecution: If the publick Peace must be sacrificed to private Revenge, certainly the Complaint is impudent and brutish, and deserves to be sent to the Law for an Answer, and to the Goal for Satisfaction.

But it is a sure, though no new Observation, That the most *Obnoxious* are still the most *querulous*: That Discontent, and the Cause of it, are generally from the same Person: And, that when once the Remorses of Guilt and Villainy improve into Discontent, it is not less difficult to make such Persons contented than to make them innocent.

Rigor and Contempt, are the best Correctors of this Distemper. And he who thinks that such Persons may be pacified, may as well attempt to satisfy the Bottomless Pit, the Cravings of Hell, or the Appetites of the Grave, which, may sooner be *filled* (as impossible as that is) than be *satisfied*.

For where Interests are contradictory (as in all Societies, or Companies of Men some must needs be) there an universal Satisfaction is just
in

S E R M O N XIV. 309

in the same measure possible, in which Contradictions, are reconcilable. And doubtless there have been those, who have heartily cursed that Rain, or Sunshine, for which others have as heartily prayed.

Even our Blessed Saviour himself, we read, in the xii Hebr. v. 3. *Endured the Contradiction of Sinners*: And (be it spoke with Reverence) it would put Providence itself to a kind of Non-plus, to attempt any Dispensation of it to an universal Acceptance; any more than that glorious Fountain of Light the Sun, can shine upon all the Corners of the Earth at Once: Wherefore, since the Distemper (we speak of) is incorrigible, and the Remedy deplorable: Let not bare *Power*, attempt to out-do *Omnipotence*; nor the *Gods of the Earth* (as they are called) think to do that, which the *God of Heaven*, has never yet thought fit to effect.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both now and for ever more.

Amen.

S E R-

S E R M O N XV.

A FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

MATTH. V. 25, 26.

*Agree with thine adversary quickly,
while thou art in the way with him:
lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.*

Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

IN these words Christ endeavours to in-
force that high and noble duty of an
amicable concord and agreement betwixt
brethren ; the greatest bond of society and
* Y the

312 S E R M O N XV.

the most becoming ornament of religion : and since it is to be supposed, that men's frailty and passion will sometimes carry them out to a violation and breach of it ; and, if not prevented, settle in a fix'd and lasting rancour ; he prescribes the antidote of a speedy reconciliation, as the only sovereign and certain remedy against the poisonous ferment of so working a distemper. If an injury be once done, Christ will have the repentance almost as early as the provocation, the rupture drawn up as soon as made, the angry word eaten as soon as uttered, and in a manner disowned before it is quite spoke ; that so men's quickness in the one, may in some measure answer and compound for their hastiness in the other.

And since those are always the strongest and most effectual addresses to the mind of man, that press a duty not only by the proposal of rewards to such as perform, but also of punishments to such as neglect it ; Christ therefore shews us the necessity of immediately making peace with our injured brother, from the unavoidable misery of those obstinate wretches, that persist in, and, (as much as in them lies) perpetuate an injury ; and being mortal themselves, yet affect a kind of immortality in their mutual hatreds and animosities.

As for the words, some understand them in a *literal* ; and some in a *figurative* sense.

Those

Those who take them literally, affirm that Christ intended no parable in them at all, but by *adversary* meant any man whom we had injured, any one that has an action against us; and by *way*, a way properly so taken; and by a *judge, officer and prison*, an earthly judge, officer and prison. And thus *Chrysostome* understands them, according to the strict acceptation of the letter, affirming that Christ's whole scope and intent was to terrify men from being injurious to their brethren, by shewing what severe inexorable usage would attend such as should offend in this kind.

Others will have the whole scheme of the text *figurative*, and to be understood only in a spiritual sense: according to which opinion, it will be requisite to give some short account of the several terms contained therein, and to shew briefly and distinctly, what may spiritually be meant by each of them.

I. And first, for the word *adversary*. Not to traverse the various and differing opinions of commentators; if the form of the words should be only tropical and figurative, I conceive it most rational to understand here by *adversary*, either the divine law, or a man's own conscience as commissioned by that law, to accuse, charge and arraign him before the great and dreadful tribunal of God. For to make either God himself the adversary, who in this case must of necessity be supposed to be the judge; or Satan the ad-

adversary, who upon the same account must needs be the officer or executioner; or lastly, to make a man's own sin the adversary, which howsoever it may cry out for justice against him; yet can with no tolerable sense be said to be that, which he is here commanded to agree with; these, I say, all and every one of them are such unnatural assertions, and the grounds of them so weak, and the consequences of them so absurd, that any ordinary reason may soon discern the falseness and unfitness of such an exposition of the word: which, how tropical soever the scheme of the text may be, still ought to maintain that due analogy and relation, that the things signified by those words naturally bear to one another.

2. By *the way* is meant the time of this life, or rather the present opportunities of repentance; which last not always as long as life lasts. These are the happy season of making up all differences with a threatening law and an accusing conscience; the great path-way of peace, in which we may meet and join hands with our angry adversary, and so close up all those fatal breaches, through which the wrath of an ireful judge may hereafter break in upon us.

3. By *judge* is meant (as we have intimated already) the great God of heaven, who at the last and great day shall judge the world. We may behold him in *Psal.* 50. as it were
advanced

S E R M O N XV. 315

advanced upon his throne of justice, and from thence summoning all flesh before him to receive sentence according to the merit of their ways; and it is emphatically added in *ψ* 6. of that *Psalms*, *for God is judge himself*.

4. By *officer* (as we also hinted before) is to be meant the devil, the great jailor of souls, the cruel and remorseless executioner of that last and terrible sentence, which the righteous judge of heaven and earth shall award to all impenitent sinners.

5. By *prison* (no doubt) is meant hell, that vast, wide, comprehensive receptacle of *damned spirits*: from whence there is no redemption or return. As for that larger signification, that some would fasten upon the word here, there is no solid ground for it, either in the context or the reason of the thing itself. Hell is a prison large enough already, and we need not enlarge it by our expositions.

6. And lastly, by *paying the utmost farthing*, must be signified, the guilty person's being dealt with according to the utmost rigour and extremity of justice. For when the sinner is once lodged in that sad place, his punishment can have neither remission nor extenuation: but there must be an exact commensuration between the guilt and the penalty; which must be adjusted according to the strictest measures of the law. For mercy

316 S E R M O N XV.

has no more to do, when justice is once commanded to do its office.

All these things are very easy and obvious, and I cannot but think it needless to insist any longer upon them.

And thus I have given you both the literal and the figurative sense of the words; and if it be now asked which of them is to take place, I answer, that the words are parabolical, and include them both. For the better understanding of which, we are to observe these two things concerning parables.

First, that every parable is made up of two parts.

(1.) The material literal part, which is contained in those bare words and expressions in which it is set down.

(2.) The formal, spiritual part, or application of the parable, which consists of those things that are farther signified to us under those literal expressions.

The other thing to be observed is, That this spiritual part or application of the parable is sometimes expressed and positively set down *in terminis*: as in St. *Matth.* xiii. where Christ speaks of the seed and of the ground. He afterwards explains himself, and says, that by the seed is meant the word, and by the ground, the hearers. And sometimes again this spiritual part is not expressed, but only implied or understood, as in *Matth.* xxv. where Christ sets down the parable of the
wise

S E R M O N XV. 317

wise and foolish virgins, yet does not in express words set down the spiritual meaning and design of it, but leaves us to comment upon that in our own meditations. And so he does here; we have the literal part or outside of the parable expressed, but the spiritual sense of it understood.

Now these two rules thus premised, we are to observe farther, That in the application of the parable, and bringing the two parts of it together, the literal and the spiritual, we are not to search after a nice and exact agreement between them in every particular; but to attend only their correspondence in the design, drift and purpose of the parable. Which design doubtless in these words is no other than to set forth the severity of God's proceedings against all impenitent unreconciled sinners, by shewing that strict and unrelenting severity, that a man not reconciled to his adversary meets with, even before the tribunals of men: so that we are not now anxiously to strain the parable, and to fit every member of the literal expression to the spiritual meaning; as that, because in judicial processes amongst men, there is an adversary, a judge, and an officer, and all these three distinct persons, there must therefore be such an œconomy in the tribunal of heaven. No; all these things belong only to the material part, the dress and ornament of the parable; but the sense and purpose that Christ drives

318 S E R M O N XV.

at, is that only, which we are here to insist upon. As if Christ should say,

You know that in matters between man and man, when one has trespassed against another, if the party offending, while he has opportunity to make his peace with the party offended, shall neglect it, so that the matter comes at length to be brought before the judge; he is then to look for nothing but the most rigorous penalty of the law without mitigation. Just so it is, between God and man: If any one sins against God, whether by offending his brother, or by any other kind of sin whatsoever, if he does not speedily and prudently lay hold on the opportunity of reconciling himself to God in this life, when God shall enter into judgement with him in the next, there will then be no mercy for him; but according to the exact tenor of a righteous indispensable law, he must abide the woful irreversible sentence of eternal death. This is a compendious paraphrase upon the text, setting forth the full meaning of our Saviour in it. So that from what has been laid down, I shall now present you with the sense of the words, under these three conclusions.

1. That the time of this life is the only time for a sinner, to make his peace with and to reconcile himself to God.

2. That the consideration that the time of this life is the only time for a sinner to reconcile

S E R M O N XV. 319

cile himself to God in, ought to be a prevailing unanswerable argument to engage and quicken his repentance.

3. That if a sinner lets pass this season of making his peace with God, he irrecoverably falls into an estate of utter perdition.

I shall single out the second for the subject of the present discourse, and take in the rest under the arguments by which I shall prove it.

The proposition therefore to be handled is this, *That the consideration, &c.* Now this shall be made appear these three ways.

I. By comparing the shortness of life with the difficulty of this work.

II. By comparing the uncertainty of life with the necessity of it. And,

III. And lastly, by considering the sad and fatal doom that will infallibly attend the neglect of it.

I. And for the first of these. Let us compare the shortness of life with the greatness and difficulty of the work here set before us. What is a man's whole life but the inconsiderable measure of a span? and yet the vast business of eternity is crowded into this poor compass. It is a transitory puff of wind; while it breathes, it expires. The years of our life are but too fitly styled in holy writ the days of our life. Man takes his breath
but

320 S E R M O N XV.

but short, and that is an argument that it is always departing. *Our days* (says the royal prophet) *are but as a shadow*. Every day added to our life sets us so much nearer to death, as the longer the shadow grows, the day is so much the nearer spent. *Few and evil have the days of my life been*, says Jacob in *Genes.* xlvii. 9. The number of our calamities far exceeds the number of our days. *It is a pilgrimage*, (as it is expressed in the same verse) it is a going through the world, not a dwelling in it. We do not use to make any long stay in the journey, nor to take up our habitation at an inn. As *Lott* said of *Zoar* the city of life, so we may say of the time and space of life, is it not a little one? How is it passing away continually, how is it stealing from us, while we are eating, sleeping, talking! How is it shortened even while we are complaining of its shortness! There is nothing that we can either think, speak, or do, but it takes up some time. We cannot purchase so much as a thought or a word without the expence of some of our precious moments. God has shut us up within the boundaries of a contracted age, so that we cannot attempt, much less atchieve, any thing great or considerable. Our time is too scant and narrow for our designs. Our thoughts perish before they can ripen into action; the space of life being like the bed mentioned in *Isai.* xxviii. 20.

'tis

'tis shorter than a man can well stretch himself upon it. For how do we hear the Saints complaining of this in scripture! Sometimes it is termed a *vapour*, *James iv. 14.* a thing that appears and disappears almost in the same instant. Sometimes it is likened *to a tale that is told*, *Psal. xc. 9.* A frivolous thing, and after a few words speaking, quickly at an end. And sometimes again, it is resembled to *a watch in the night.* We are presently called off our station, and another generation comes in our room. This is the best that can be said of life, and what shall we do to make it otherwise? Stretch or draw it out we cannot beyond the fatal line; 'tis not in our power to add one cubit to the measure of our days. We cannot slacken the pace of one of our posting minutes. But time will have its uncontrolled course and career, bringing age and death along with it, and like the *Parthian* shooting its killing arrows, while it flies from us. This is our condition here, this the lot of nature and mortality.

And now, if upon this transient survey of the shortness of life, we could find that our business were as small as our age is short, it would be some relief to us however. But on the contrary, the work of our lives is long, difficult, tedious and comprehensive, such as could easily exhaust and take up the utmost period of the most extended age, and still cry out for more. And if so, then certainly,

to

322 S E R M O N XV.

to have a large task enjoined, and but a poor pittance of time to discharge it in, to have a large tale of brick required, and a small allowance of straw to prepare it with, cannot but be a great and heart-discouraging disadvantage. Yet this is our case, our sin has cut short our time, and enlarged our work : as it is with a man going up an hill, and falling backwards ; his journey is thereby made longer, and his strength weaker. *Seneca* speaking of the shortness of life, says, that we did not first receive it short, but have made it so. But by his favour, nature gave it but short, and we by ill husbanding it have made it much shorter ; spending vainly and lavishly upon a small stock, so many of our precious hours being cast away upon idle discourse, intemperate sleep, unnecessary recreations, if not also heinous sins ; all which have set us backward in the accounts of eternity, and are now to be reckoned amongst *the things that are not* : while in the mean time the business incumbent on us, is to recover our lost souls, to return and reconcile ourselves to a provoked God, to get our natures renewed, and re-informed with an holy and divine principle ; and in a word, to regain our title to heaven. All these are great, high, and amazing works, beyond our strength, nay, our very apprehensions, if an overpowering grace from heaven does not assist and carry us above ourselves. 'Tis a miracle to consider,

sider, that such a pitiful thing as this life is, even upon the longest extent and the best improvement of it, should afford time enough to compass so vast a business, as the working out of a man's salvation.

Now the difficulty of this business will appear from these considerations:

1st, Because in this business thou art to clear thy self of an injury done to an infinite offended justice, to appease an infinite wrath, and an infinite provoked majesty. And this must needs be no small or ordinary work; for who can stand before them! Wherefore it is the highest prudence to engage in it betimes, and to take up injuries between God and thy soul as speedily as may be. For if God should go to law with thee, or thou with him, thou wert undone for ever. He who goes to law with this king, is like to have but bad success. *No flesh living (says the Psalmist) shall in thy sight be justified.* Certainly the consideration of thy debts should take up thy thoughts, even by night as well as day, hold thy eyes waking, and make thee take every step with terror lest divine justice should arrest thee of a sudden. For O man! whosoever thou art, according as the party is whom thou hast offended, the difficulty of the reconciliation will be proportionable. If thou hast offended a *friend*, the Spirit of God says, *that it is easier to win a castle, than to regain such an one.* If thou hast offended thy

324 S E R M O N X V.

thy sovereign, the anger of a king is as the roaring of a lion. Now thy business is to make thy peace, both with an offended friend, and with an affronted sovereign. Thy debts are many thousand talents; and as for thee to pay them is impossible, so to get a surety for so much will be very difficult. When a creditor is urgent for his money, or for thy body, there is no demur, no delay then to be made. God has a writ out against thee, and is ready to arrest thee either for the debt or for thy soul. And it will cost thee many prayers, many an hard fight and combat with thy sin, many mortifying duties and bitter pangs of repentance, before Christ will come in and pay the debt and set thee free: and when this is done, how difficult will it be to get the Spirit to set his seal to thy pardon, and to keep the evidences of it for thee clear and entire. For without thy justification thou canst have no security, and without thy evidences thou canst have no comfort. It requires the most strict and accurate walking before God that can be, with a frequent and thorough examination of all thy experiences; and yet perhaps when all this is done, thou mayst fall short of it at last. For sometimes one great sin, one dangerous false step in the ways of God, may so blot thy evidences, that thou shalt even think the love of God is gone from thee; that he has shut up his tender bowels in anger, and that he has forgotten to be gracious:

cious : so that thou mayst go mourning all thy days, and die doubtful whether thou hast made a thorough peace with God or no. And is not the overcoming of this difficulty worth the spending of thy best time and thy choicest endeavours ? Can it be done in a moment ? Is it, think you, the easy performance of a few hours ? No ; God has rated these acquirements at the price of our greatest, severest and longest labours. And to show yet farther, how difficult it is to make thy peace with the great God, consider how hard it is to make thy peace with thy own conscience. And shall a bare *witness* (for conscience is no more) prosecute the suit so hard against thee, and shall not the *adversary* himself be much more violent and hard to be taken off ? When thy own heart shall so bitterly charge thee with thy guilt and the black roll of thy most provoking sins shall be read against thee, by an angry conscience, will a small matter, think you, give it satisfaction ? Will a few broken sighs, and tears, and mournful words, make it compound the matter with thee, and let the suit fall ? No certainly, the time of thy whole life, upon the best and strictest improvement of it, is but little enough to clear up and settle all differences between thee and thy conscience ; and how much less then can it be to pacify, and make all even with thy offended God ?

2dly,

326 S E R M O N XV.

2dly, The other cause of the difficulty of making thy peace with God appears from this, that thou art utterly unable of thy self to give him any thing by way of just compensation or satisfaction. We have a large instance of something offered that way in *Micah vi. 7. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Alas! all this is but an impossible supposition; but yet shews, that all and the very utmost, that the creature does, or can do, or give, is but *debt and duty*, and that surely is not meritorious.

Can a man pay his old debts by discharging his present? Can the creature oblige God by any good duty, when it is God himself, that enables him to perform that duty? It may be said, that Christ has engaged to make the soul's peace, to clear off his debts to God. True: but then the soul engages in a new debt of faith and obedience to Christ. And here all the stress of the business lies, how the soul will be able to pay off this; and to secure it self a well-grounded interest and confidence in Christ; to take him in respect of all his offices; not only to be saved, but also to be ruled by him; not only as a priest, but also as a king. This will drink up and engross all that the soul can do and endeavour; all the strength and time allotted in this world, is little enough to do such works as may prove the sincerity of
its

its faith. For whatsoever relation faith may have to works, whether as to a part, or to a consequent to it; it is certainly such a thing, as indispensably obliges the whole of a man's following life, to a strict, constant and universal obedience to the laws of Christ. But that, which ought chiefly to quicken the soul to a sudden improvement of the perishing time of this life in making its peace with God, is this, that as Christ will not undertake for it without faith and repentance, so the offer of these does not last always. The consideration of this made the Apostle quicken the *Hebrews* to present duty. *To-day if you will hear his voice*, Hebr. iii. 15. There may be those offers of mercy made to thee to-day, that thou mayst not enjoy again for ever. The things of thy peace may be freely held forth to thee now, which for the future may be set out of thy reach. Consider therefore upon what terms thou standest with God, and lose no time: the work is difficult, and the delay dangerous, and the time short. The Spirit, that to-day stands at thy door and knocks, may be gone before to-morrow; and when it is once sent away, no man can assure himself, that it will ever return.

And thus much concerning the first argument to prove the doctrine, drawn from our comparing the shortness of life with the greatness and difficulty of the work.

*

Z

II.

328. S E R M O N XV.

II^d Argument, is taken from our comparing the uncertainty of life with the necessity of the work. Life, as it is short, so 'tis dubious ; like a problematical question, concise, but doubtful. None can promise beyond the present. Who can secure to himself the enjoyment of a year, nay of one day, one hour? *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee*, Luk. xii. 20. A man is in this contracted life as in a narrow sea, ever and anon ready to be cast away. Strength and health of body can make thee no absolute promise of life, although the surest grounds we can build upon. For may we not take up the complaint of *David*, and mourn over the immature death of the strong! *How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished?* How are the strong and healthful become a prey to an untimely death! Count not therefore how many hours thou hast to live in the world: look not upon thy hour-glass; do not build upon the sand. Death may snatch thee away of a sudden. As it is always terrible, so it is often unexpected. Thou flourishest at present like a flower, but the wind bloweth where and when it listeth. *It passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more*; Psal. ciii. 16.

Now this being considered and duely pondered in one scale of the balance, and the necessity of making our peace in the other, how should it incite us to a serious, present endeavour for the accomplishment of this work?

S E R M O N XV. 329

Can two walk together, unless they be agreed? says the Prophet *Amos*, iii. 3. Canst thou walk quietly with God while he is thy adversary? Will not the consideration of this, that thou art going to the judge, and the way is short, and thy adversary ready to give in an accusation against thee, whet thy importunity to make an agreement with him? Thy endeavours are not serious and rational, unless they are present and immediate. That endeavour is only rational, which is according to the exigency of the thing. Now the business of thy soul is the matter thou art to engage in, and thou art only sure of the present time to manage it in. Unless this be laid hold of, thou dost really trifle in the business of eternity, and dost only embrace a pretence instead of a serious intention. Things that are earnestly desired, and withal not to be delayed, are effected with an immediate expedition. If I am uncertain when my enemy will invade me, I will imagine that he will do it suddenly, and therefore my preparations shall be sudden. In things that concern our temporal interest, we are so wise as to make present provision; and not to suspend all upon contingent futurities. He that is sick to-day, will not defer sending for a physician till to-morrow. He that waits for the fall of some preferment, puts himself in a present preparedness. But alas! upon all these things the most we can write, it is convenience, not necessity.

330 S E R M O N XV.

cessity. There is one thing, and but one that is necessary. 'Tis not necessary that thou shouldest be healthful, nor that thou shouldest be honourable : but it is necessary for thee to be saved ; to be at peace with God ; to have the hand-writing that is against thee, by reason of the law, blotted out ; to be friends with an Almighty adversary. 'Twas the note of a merry Epicure, but may be refined into a voice becoming a Christian, Το σημερον μέλει μοι, το δ' αύριον τις αιδε ; I will take care for to-day, who knows to-morrow ? Let the Christian lay hold of the present occasion ; and if he would live for ever, let him look upon himself as living but to-day : let this be secured, and whatsoever comes afterwards, let him reckon it as an over-plus, and an unexpected gain. If to-day it be thy business to gain a peace ; all the rest of thy days 'tis thy only business to enjoy it. Reason is impatient of delay in things necessary, and Christianity elevates reason, and makes it more impatient. Are we not bid to watch, to be ready, to have our loins girt and our lamps prepared ? Now the persuasive force of this is grounded upon the uncertainty of Christ's coming : although his coming be but once, yet if it is uncertain, the expectation of it must be continual. As indefinite commands do universally engage, so indefinite uncertain dangers are the just arguments of perpetual caution. O that men would be but wise, and consider, and lay aside their sins, and stand upon
their

their guard ! Wouldest thou be willing that a sudden judgement should stop thy breath while thou art a swearing, or a lying ? Wouldest thou have God break in upon thee, while thou art in the loathsome embraces of a filthy whore ? Wouldest thou have death come and arrest thee in the name of God, while thou art in thy cups, and in thy drunkenness ? Now since these sudden soul-disasters may fall out, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ?* Who knows, but within a few days a noisome disease may stop thy breath ? it did so to *Herod*. Or perhaps an unfortunate stab send thee packing ? it did so to *Abner*. Or perhaps a stone from the house dash out thy brains, and prove both thy death and thy sepulchre ? it did so to *Abimelech*. These small inconsiderable things commissioned by a Deity, are able to snap asunder the rotten thread of a weak life, and waft thee into eternity. And if thou hast not prepared a way before-hand, by concluding a solid peace with God, thou wilt find but sad welcome in the other world. Thou art indeed taken from the prison of thy body ; but it is because thou art led to thy eternal execution.

And thus much concerning the second argument drawn from the uncertainty of life, compared with the necessity of the work.

III. The third argument to prove that the consideration, that the time of life is the only time of making peace with God, ought to quicken us to a speedy repentance, may be

332 S E R M O N XV.

taken from considering the dismal doom that does attend those who go out of the world before their peace is made.

Now the misery and terror of this doom consists in two things.

1. That it is *inevitable*, it cannot be avoided.

2. That it is *irreversible*, it cannot be revoked. And this takes in the substance of the third doctrine, *viz.* that if a soul let pass this season of making its peace with God, it immediately falls into a state of irrecoverable perdition.

1. This doom is inevitable, it cannot be avoided. When we have to do with a strong enemy, if we cannot fly from him, we must of necessity fall by him. If we cannot out-run vengeance, we must endure it. The poor soul is now fallen into an ocean of endless misery, and if it cannot swim or bear up it self, must sink. The place of torment is before thee, and an infinite power behind thee, to drive thee into it; therefore in thou must, there is no remedy. No ways to escape, unless thou canst either out-wit God, or overpower him. All possibility of escaping an evil must be either by hiding one self from it, and so keeping our selves from that; or by repulsing it, and so keeping that from us. But either of these are impossible for thee to do, when thou art environed on this side by an omniscience, on the other by an

S E R M O N XV. 333

an omnipotence. We read of those that shall *cry unto the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to cover them from the face of the Lamb, and of him that sitteth upon the throne; Revel. vi. 16.* But alas! what poor asylums are these, when God by his all-seeing eye can look through the mountains, and by his hand can remove them? A condemned malefactor may break the prison, and fly and escape the punishment. But canst thou break the gates of hell? canst thou like a stronger *Sampson* carry away the door of the infernal pit? Oh! who can be strong in the day that the Lord shall thus deal with him! Admit, thou couldst unfetter thy self, and break thy prison; yet thou wert not able to run from God; God has his arrows of vengeance, and canst thou out-fly an arrow? To speak after the manner of men, thou hast a severe judge and a watchful jaylor. As he that keeps *Israel*, so he that imprisons thee does neither slumber nor sleep. He has an eagle's eye to observe, and an eagle's wing to overtake thee: there is no way to avoid him. If thou canst find the way out of the midst of utter darkness, break asunder the everlasting chains, break through the devil and his angels, and those armies of eternal woes, then mayst thou wring thy self out of God's hands.

2. This doom is irreverfible, it cannot be revoked. It is proper to any word, when once spoken, to fly away beyond all possibility of

334 S E R M O N XV.

a recall ; but much more to every decretory word of God, which the deliberate resolutions of an infinitely wise judge, have made unchangeable. The word is gone out of God's mouth in righteousness, it shall not return ; God's condemning sentence admits of no repeal. *The strength of Israel is not a man, or the son of man, that he should repent,* 1 Sam. xv. 29. The outcries of a miserable perishing man, may often prevail with a man like himself, who is of the same mould, the same affections, so far as to cause an act of passion and commiseration to revoke an act of justice. But alas ! all the cravings and the wailings of a justly condemned sinner, shall be answered of God with *I know you not.* All such lamentations cannot at all move a resolved Deity ; they are like a vanishing voice echoing back from a marble pillar, without making the least impresson. *As the tree falls, so it lies.*

If the sinner falls into destruction, there he must lie for ever without recovery. *I sink,* (says David) *in the mire where there is no standing ;* Psal. lxxix. 2. What he says of his affliction, a lost soul may say of its perdition ; that it sinks deeper and deeper, it cannot so much as arrive to a stand, much less to a return. A man, while he is yet falling from some high place, is not able to stop or to recover himself, much less can he be able, when he is actually fallen. Even the Heathen poet,
from

from those imperfect notions, that the Heathens had of the future misery of lost sinners, could acknowledge the descent to hell easy, but the return impossible : *Facilis descensus Averni: Sed revocare gradum, &c.* 'Tis a rule in philosophy, that from a total privation to the habit, there can be no regrefs. So after a total loss of God's love and presence, there is no possibility of reobtaining it. For put the case that it were possible, yet who should sollicite and seek out thy pardon, and get thy sentence reversed? It must be either God, or angels, or men. First, it cannot be God the Father, for he is thy angry judge, and therefore cannot be thy advocate. Nor God the Son, for him thou hast crucified afresh, and his offers of redemption are only upon the scene of this life. *He prays not for the world, John xvii. 9.* that is, for the wicked world; then much less for the condemned world. The Spirit will not intercede for thee; for him thou hast often grieved, and frustrated all the methods of his workings. Now good angels cannot present a petition for thee, for it is as much their work and business to glorify God in the destruction of the wicked, as in the salvation of the righteous. The devils are the instruments of thy misery, and thy tormentors will never prove thy intercessors. As for men, those that are saved are the approvers, and those that are condemned are the companions of thy misery; but neither can be thy helpers. Perpetual therefore must thy

336 S E R M O N XV.

thy perdition needs be; when both the Creator, and all his creatures, are concerned either to advance, or at least to rejoice over thy destruction. O let every sinner, that is yet on this side the pit, carry this in his more serious thoughts, *Psal. xlix. 8. The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.* The loss of time, and the loss of a soul, is irrecoverable.

All the application I shall make, shall be to urge over the same duty enjoined in the text upon the score of another argument, and that also couched in the words, *Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way*; yea, for this very reason, because thou art in the way. *As long as there is life, there is hope*, we say: and so, as long as there is the enjoyment of a temporal life, there may be just hope of an eternal. These days of thy respite, they are golden days: every hour presents thee with salvation; every day lays heaven and happiness at thy door. Wherefore go forth, and meet thy adversary; do not fly off and say, *there is a lion in the way*; that he is austere and hard to be appeased. No, he does not come cloathed with thunder and terror, but with all the sweetness, and inviting tenderness that mercy itself can put on. Thou hast a friendly enemy, one whose bowels yearn over thee; for although of all others, he is, if unreconciled, the most terrible; so to be reconciled he is the most willing. While with one hand he shakes his

S E R M O N XV. 337

his rod at thee for departing from him, with the other he graciously beckons to thee to return. And if thou canst so far relent, as to endeavour it; believe it, he is ready to meet thee half way: he did so to the prodigal.

O consider then, this thy inestimable advantage, that thou art yet in the way, yet in a possibility, nay in a probability of reconciliation. Thou art not put to sue for terms of peace, but only to accept of those that are freely offered and prepared to thy hand. Close in with such a potent adversary, 'tis thy wisdom, thy eternal interest, thy life; thou mayst so carry the business, as to turn thy enemy into thy Saviour. Wherefore take that excellent advice of the Spirit, with which I shall conclude; *Psal. ii. ult. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way.*

The End of the Seventh Volume.

ERRATA in this Volume.

- P. 80. line 4. *for* contended, *read* contented.
- P. 84. l. 1. *for* arguments, *r.* argument.
- P. 245. l. 4. *for* inclinces, *r.* inclines.
- P. 246. l. 19. *for* temper, *r.* tempter.
- P. 258. l. 14. *for* confute, *r.* conclude.
- P. 284. l. 4. *for* said, *r.* second.
- P. 289. l. 8. *for* read, *r.* red.
- P. 290. l. 20. *for* two, *r.* true.

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]

form 410

51 MAY 27 1917

ST

8